ENDYMION

145

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

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"Quicquid agunt homines."

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CHAPTER I.

It was a rich, warm night, at the beginning of August, when a gentleman enveloped in a cloak, for he was in evening dress, emerged from a club-house at the top of St. James' Street, and descended that celebrated eminence. He had not proceeded more than half way down the street when, encountering a friend, he stopped with some abruptness.

'I have been looking for you everywhere,' he said.

'What is it?'

'We can hardly talk about it here.'

'Shall we go to White's?'

'I have just left it, and, between ourselves, I would rather we should be more alone. 'Tis as warm as noon. Let us cross the street and get into St. James' Place. That is always my idea of solitude.'

So they crossed the street, and, at the corner of St. James' Place, met several gentlemen who had just come out of Brookes' Club-house. These saluted the companions as they passed, and said, 'Capital account from Chiswick—Lord Howard says the chief will be in Downing Street on Monday.'

'It is of Chiswick that I am going to speak to you,' said the gentleman in the cloak, putting his arm in that of his companion as they walked on. 'What I am about to tell you is known only to three persons, and is the most sacred of secrets. Nothing but our friendship could authorise me to impart it to you.'

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'I hope it is something to your advantage,' said his companion.

'Nothing of that sort; it is of yourself that I am thinking. Since our political estrangement, I have never had a contented moment. From Christ Church, until that unhappy paralytic stroke, which broke up a government that had lasted fifteen years, and might have continued fifteen more, we seemed always to have been working together. That we should again unite is my dearest wish. A crisis is at hand. I want you to use it to your advantage. Know then, that what they were just saying about Chiswick is moonshine. His case is hopeless, and it has been communicated to the King.'

'Hopeless!'

'Rely upon it; it came direct from the Cottage to my friend.'

'I thought he had a mission?' said his companion, with emotion; 'and men with missions do not disappear till they have fulfilled them.'

'But why did you think so? How often have I asked you for your grounds for such a conviction! There are none. The man of the age is clearly the Duke, the saviour of Europe, in the perfection of manhood, and with an iron constitution.'

'The salvation of Europe is the affair of a past generation,' said his companion. 'We want something else now. The salvation of England should be the subject rather of our present thoughts.'

'England! why when were things more sound? Except the split among our own men, which will be now cured, there is not a cause of disquietude.'

'I have much,' said his friend.

'You never used to have any, Sidney. What extraordinary revelations can have been made to you during three months of office under a semi-Whig Ministry?'

'Your taunt is fair, though it pains me. And I confess to you that when I resolved to follow Canning and join his new allies, I had many a twinge. I was bred in the Tory camp; the Tories put me in Parliament and gave me office; I lived with

them and liked them; we dined and voted together, and together pasquinaded our opponents. And yet, after Castlereagh's death, to whom like yourself I was much attached, I had great misgivings as to the position of our party, and the future of the country. I tried to drive them from my mind, and at last took refuge in Canning, who seemed just the man appointed for an age of transition.'

'But a transition to what?'

'Well, his foreign policy was Liberal.'

'The same as the Duke's; the same as poor dear Castlereagh's. Nothing more unjust than the affected belief that there was any difference between them—a ruse of the Whigs to foster discord in our ranks. And as for domestic affairs, no one is stouter against Parliamentary Reform, while he is for the Church and no surrender, though he may make a harmless speech now and then, as many of us do, in favour of the Catholic claims.'

'Well, we will not now pursue this old controversy, my dear Ferrars, particularly if it be true, as you say, that Mr. Canning now lies upon his deathbed.'

'If! I tell you at this very moment it may be all over.'

'I am shaken to my very centre.'

'It is doubtless a great blow to you,' rejoined Mr. Ferrars, 'and I wish to alleviate it. That is why I was looking for you. The King will, of course, send for the Duke, but I can tell you there will be a disposition to draw back our friends that left us, at least the younger ones of promise. If you are awake, there is no reason why you should not retain your office.'

'I am not so sure the King will send for the Duke.'

'It is certain.'

'Well,' said his companion musingly, 'it may be fancy, but I cannot resist the feeling that this country, and the world generally, are on the eve of a great change—and I do not think the Duke is the man for the epoch.'

'I see no reason why there should be any great change; certainly not in this country,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'Here we have changed everything that was required. Peel has settled the

criminal law, and Huskisson the currency, and though I am prepared myself still further to reduce the duties on foreign imports, no one can deny that on this subject the Government is in advance of public opinion.'

'The whole affair rests on too contracted a basis,' said his companion. 'We are habituated to its exclusiveness, and, no doubt, custom in England is a power; but let some event suddenly occur which makes a nation feel or think, and the whole thing might vanish like a dream.'

'What can happen? Such affairs as the Luddites do not occur twice in a century, and as for Spafields riots, they are impossible now with Peel's new police. The country is employed and prosperous, and were it not so, the landed interest would always keep things straight.'

'It is powerful, and has been powerful for a long time; but there are other interests besides the landed interest now.'

'Well, there is the colonial interest, and the shipping interest,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and both of them thoroughly with us.'

'I was not thinking of them,' said his companion. 'It is the increase of population, and of a population not employed in the cultivation of the soil, and all the consequences of such circumstances that were passing over my mind.'

'Don't you be too doctrinaire, my dear Sidney; you and I are practical men. We must deal with the existing, the urgent; and there is nothing more pressing at this moment than the formation of a new government. What I want is to see you a member of it.'

'Ah!' said his companion with a sigh, 'do you really think it so near as that?'

'Why, what have we been talking of all this time, my dear Sidney? Clear your head of all doubt, and, if possible, of all regrets; we must deal with facts, and we must deal with them to-morrow.'

'I still think he had a mission,' said Sidney with a sigh, 'if it were only to bring hope to a people.'

'Well, I do not see he could have done anything more,' said

Mr. Ferrars, 'nor do I believe his government would have lasted during the session. However, I must now say good-night, for I must look in at the Square. Think well of what I have said, and let me hear from you as soon as you can.'

CHAPTER II.

Zenobia was the queen of London, of fashion, and of the Tory party. When she was not holding high festivals, or attending them, she was always at home to her intimates, and as she deigned but rarely to honour the assemblies of others with her presence, she was generally at her evening post to receive the initiated. To be her invited guest under such circumstances proved at once that you had entered the highest circle of the social Paradise.

Zenobia was leaning back on a brilliant sofa, supported by many cushions, and a great personage, grey-headed and blue-ribboned, who was permitted to share the honours of the high place, was hanging on her animated and inspiring accents. An ambassador, in an armed chair which he had placed somewhat before her, while he listened with apparent devotion to the oracle, now and then interposed a remark, polished and occasionally cynical. More remote, some dames of high degree were surrounded by a chosen band of rank and fashion and celebrity; and now and then was heard a silver laugh, and now and then was breathed a gentle sigh. Servants glided about the suite of summer chambers, occasionally with sherbets and ices, and sometimes a lady entered and saluted Zenobia, and then retreated to the general group, and sometimes a gentleman entered, and pressed the hand of Zenobia to his lips, and then vanished into air.

'What I want you to see,' said Zenobia, 'is that reaction is

the law of life, and that we are on the eve of a great reaction. Since Lord Castlereagh's death we have had five years of revolution—nothing but change, and every change has been disastrous. Abroad we are in league with all the conspirators of the Continent, and if there were a general war we should not have an ally; at home our trade, I am told, is quite ruined, and we are deluged with foreign articles; while, thanks to Mr. Huskisson, the country banks, which enabled Mr. Pitt to carry on the war and saved England, are all broken. There was one thing, of which I thought we should always be proud, and that was our laws and their administration; but now our most sacred enactments are questioned, and people are told to call out for the reform of our courts of judicature, which used to be the glory of the land. This cannot last. I see, indeed, many signs of national disgust; people would have borne a great deal from poor Lord Liverpool—for they knew he was a good man, though I always thought a weak one; but when it was found that this boasted Liberalism only meant letting the Whigs into office—who, if they had always been in office, would have made us the slaves of Bonaparte—their eyes were opened. Depend upon it, the reaction has commenced.'

'We shall have some trouble with France,' said the ambassador, 'unless there is a change here.'

'The Church is weary of the present men,' said the great personage. 'No one really knows what they are after.'

'And how can the country be governed without the Church?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'If the country once thinks the Church is in danger, the affair will soon be finished. The King ought to be told what is going on.'

'Nothing is going on,' said the ambassador; 'but everybody is afraid of something.'

'The King's friends should impress upon him never to lose sight of the landed interest,' said the great personage.

'How can any government go on without the support of the Church and the land?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'It is quite unnatural.'

'That is the mystery,' remarked the ambassador. 'Here

is a government, supported by none of the influences hitherto deemed indispensable, and yet it exists.'

'The newspapers support it,' said the great personage, 'and the Dissenters, who are trying to bring themselves into notice, and who are said to have some influence in the northern counties, and the Whigs, who are in a hole, are willing to seize the hand of the ministry to help them out of it; and then there is always a number of people who will support any government—and so the thing works.'

'They have got a new name for this hybrid sentiment,' said the ambassador. 'They call it public opinion.'

'How very absurd!' said Zenobia; 'a mere nickname. As if there could be any opinion but that of the Sovereign and the two Houses of Parliament.'

'They are trying to introduce here the continental Liberalism,' said the great personage. 'Now we know what Liberalism means on the continent. It means the abolition of property and religion. Those ideas would not suit this country; and I often puzzle myself to foresee how they will attempt to apply Liberal opinions here.'

'I shall always think,' said Zenobia, 'that Lord Liverpool went much too far, though I never said so in his time; for I always uphold my friends.'

'Well, we shall see what Canning will do about the Test and Corporation Acts,' said the great personage. 'I understand they mean to push him.'

'By the by, how is he really?' said the ambassador. 'What are the accounts this afternoon?'

'Here is a gentleman who will tell us,' said Zenobia, as Mr. Ferrars entered and saluted her.

'And what is your news from Chiswick?' she inquired.

'They say at Brookes', that he will be at Downing Street on Monday.'

'I doubt it,' said Zenobia, but with an expression of disappointment.

Zenobia invited Mr. Ferrars to join her immediate circle.

The great personage and the ambassador were confidentially affable to one whom Zenobia so distinguished. Their conversation was in hushed tones, as become the initiated. Even Zenobia seemed subdued, and listened; and to listen, among her many talents, was perhaps her rarest. Mr. Ferrars was one of her favourites, and Zenobia liked young men who she thought would become ministers of State.

An Hungarian Princess who had quitted the opera early that she might look in at Zenobia's was now announced. The arrival of this great lady made a stir. Zenobia embraced her, and the great personage with affectionate homage yielded to her instantly the place of honour, and then soon retreated to the laughing voices in the distance that had already more than once attracted and charmed his ear.

'Mind; I see you to-morrow,' said Zenobia to Mr. Ferrars as he also withdrew. 'I shall have something to tell you.'

CHAPTER III.

The father of Mr. Ferrars had the reputation of being the son of a once somewhat celebrated statesman, but the only patrimony he inherited from his presumed parent was a clerkship in the Treasury, where he found himself drudging at an early age. Nature had endowed him with considerable abilities, and peculiarly adapted to the scene of their display. It was difficult to decide which was most remarkable, his shrewdness or his capacity of labour. His quickness of perception and mastery of details made him in a few years an authority in the office, and a Secretary of the Treasury, who was quite ignorant of details, but who was a good judge of human character, had the sense to appoint Ferrars his private secretary. This happy preferment in time opened the whole official world to one not only singularly qualified for that kind of life, but who possessed the peculiar

gifts that were then commencing to be much in demand in those circles. We were then entering that era of commercial and financial reform which had been, if not absolutely occasioned, certainly precipitated, by the revolt of our colonies. Knowledge of finance and acquaintance with tariffs were then rare gifts, and before five years of his private secretaryship had expired, Ferrars was mentioned to Mr. Pitt as the man at the Treasury who could do something that the great minister required. This decided his lot. Mr. Pitt found in Ferrars the instrument he wanted, and appreciating all his qualities placed him in a position which afforded them full play. The minister returned Ferrars to Parliament, for the Treasury then had boroughs of its own, and the new member was preferred to an important and laborious post. So long as Pitt and Grenville were in the ascendant, Mr. Ferrars toiled and flourished. He was exactly the man they liked; unwearied, vigilant, clear and cold; with a dash of natural sarcasm developed by a sharp and varied experience. He disappeared from the active world in the latter years of the Liverpool reign, when a newer generation and more bustling ideas successfully asserted their claims; but he retired with the solace of a sinecure, a pension, and a privy-councillorship. The Cabinet he had never entered, nor dared to hope to enter. It was the privilege of an inner circle even in our then contracted public life. It was the dream of Ferrars to revenge in this respect his fate in the person of his son, and only child. He was resolved that his offspring should enjoy all those advantages of education and breeding and society of which he himself had been deprived. For him was to be reserved a full initiation in those costly ceremonies which, under the names of Eton and Christ Church, in his time fascinated and dazzled mankind. His son, William Pitt Ferrars, realised even more than his father's hopes. Extremely good-looking, he was gifted with a precocity of talent. He was the marvel of Eton and the hope of Oxford. As a boy, his Latin verses threw enraptured tutors into paroxysms of praise, while debating societies hailed with acclamation clearly another heaven-born minister. He went up to Oxford

about the time that the examinations were reformed and rendered really efficient. This only increased his renown, for the name of Ferrars figured among the earliest double-firsts. Those were days when a crack university reputation often opened the doors of the House of Commons to a young aspirant; at least, after a season. But Ferrars had not to wait. His father, who watched his career with the passionate interest with which a Newmarket man watches the development of some gifted yearling, took care that all the odds should be in his favour in the race of life. An old colleague of the elder Mr. Ferrars, a worthy peer with many boroughs, placed a seat at the disposal of the youthful hero, the moment he was prepared to accept it, and he might be said to have left the University only to enter the House of Commons.

There, if his career had not yet realised the dreams of his youthful admirers, it had at least been one of progress and unbroken prosperity. His first speech was successful, though florid, but it was on foreign affairs, which permit rhetoric, and in those days demanded at least one Virgilian quotation. In this latter branch of oratorical adornment Ferrars was never deficient. No young man of that time, and scarcely any old one, ventured to address Mr. Speaker without being equipped with a Latin passage. Ferrars, in this respect, was triply armed. Indeed, when he entered public life, full of hope and promise, though disciplined to a certain extent by his mathematical training, he had read very little more than some Latin writers, some Greek plays, and some treatises of Aristotle. These with a due course of Bampton Lectures and some dipping into the 'Quarterly Review,' then in its prime, qualified a man in those days, not only for being a member of Parliament, but becoming a candidate for the responsibility of statesmanship. Ferrars made his way; for two years he was occasionally asked by the minister to speak, and then Lord Castlereagh, who liked young men, made him a Lord of the Treasury. He was Under-Secretary of State, and 'very rising,' when the death of Lord Liverpool brought about the severance of the Tory party, and Mr. Ferrars, mainly under the advice of Zenobia, resigned his office when Mr. Canning was

appointed Minister, and cast in his lot with the great destiny of the Duke of Wellington.

The elder Ferrars had the reputation of being wealthy. It was supposed that he had enjoyed opportunities of making money, and had availed himself of them, but this was not true. Though a cynic, and with little respect for his fellow-creatures, Ferrars had a pride in official purity, and when the Government was charged with venality and corruption, he would observe, with a dry chuckle, that he had seen a great deal of life, and that for his part he would not much trust any man out of Downing Street. He had been unable to resist the temptation of connecting his life with that of an individual of birth and rank; and in a weak moment, perhaps his only one, he had given his son a stepmother in a still good-looking and very expensive Viscountess-Dowager.

Mr. Ferrars was anxious that his son should make a great alliance, but he was so distracted between prudential considerations and his desire that in the veins of his grand-children there should flow blood of undoubted nobility, that he could never bring to his purpose that clear and concentrated will which was one of the causes of his success in life; and, in the midst of his perplexities, his son unexpectedly settled the question himself. Though naturally cold and calculating, William Ferrars, like most of us, had a vein of romance in his being, and it asserted itself. There was a Miss Carey, who suddenly became the beauty of the season. She was an orphan, and reputed to be no inconsiderable heiress, and was introduced to the world by an aunt who was a duchess, and who meant that her niece should be the same. Everybody talked about them, and they went everywhere—among other places to the House of Commons, where Miss Carey, spying the senators from the old ventilator in the ceiling of St. Stephen's Chapel, dropped in her excitement her opera-glass, which fell at the feet of Mr. Under-Secretary Ferrars. He hastened to restore it to its beautiful owner, whom he found accompanied by several of his friends, and he was not only thanked, but invited to remain with them;

and the next day he called, and he called very often afterwards, and many other things happened, and at the end of July the beauty of the season was married not to a Duke, but to a rising man, who Zenobia, who at first disapproved of the match—for Zenobia never liked her male friends to marry—was sure would one day be Prime Minister of England.

Mrs. Ferrars was of the same opinion as Zenobia, for she was ambitious, and the dream was captivating. And Mrs. Ferrars soon gained Zenobia's good graces, for she had many charms, and, though haughty to the multitude, was a first-rate flatterer. Zenobia liked flattery, and always said she did. Mr. Under-Secretary Ferrars took a mansion in Hill Street, and furnished it with befitting splendour. His dinners were celebrated, and Mrs. Ferrars gave suppers after the opera. The equipages of Mrs. Ferrars were distinguished, and they had a large retinue of servants. They had only two children, and they were twins, a brother and a sister, who were brought up like the children of princes. Partly for them, and partly because a minister should have a Tusculum, the Ferrars soon engaged a magnificent villa at Wimbledon, which had the advantage of admirable stables, convenient, as Mrs. Ferrars was fond of horses, and liked the children too, with their fancy ponies, to be early accustomed to riding. All this occasioned expenditure, but old Mr. Ferrars made his son a liberal allowance, and young Mrs. Ferrars was an heiress, or the world thought so, which is nearly the same, and then, too, young Mr. Ferrars was a rising man, in office, and who would always be in office for the rest of his life; at least, Zenobia said so, because he was on the right side and the Whigs were nowhere, and never would be anywhere, which was quite right, as they had wished to make us the slaves of Bonaparte.

When the King, after much hesitation, sent for Mr. Canning, on the resignation of Lord Liverpool, the Zenobian theory seemed a little at fault, and William Ferrars absolutely out of office had more than one misgiving; but after some months of doubt and anxiety, it seemed after all the great lady was

right. The unexpected disappearance of Mr. Canning from the scene, followed by the transient and embarrassed phantom of Lord Goderich, seemed to indicate an inexorable destiny that England should be ruled by the most eminent man of the age, and the most illustrious of her citizens. William Ferrars, under the inspiration of Zenobia, had thrown in his fortunes with the Duke, and after nine months of disquietude found his due reward. In the January that succeeded the August conversation in St. James' Street with Sidney Wilton, William Ferrars was sworn of the Privy Council, and held high office, on the verge of the Cabinet.

Mr. Ferrars had a dinner party in Hill Street on the day he had returned from Windsor with the seals of his new office. The catastrophe of the Goderich Cabinet, almost on the eve of the meeting of Parliament, had been so sudden, that, not anticipating such a state of affairs, Ferrars, among his other guests, had invited Sidney Wilton. He was rather regretting this when, as his carriage stopped at his own door, he observed that very gentleman on his threshold.

Wilton greeted him warmly, and congratulated him on his promotion. 'I do so at once,' he added, 'because I shall not have the opportunity this evening. I was calling here in the hope of seeing Mrs. Ferrars, and asking her to excuse me from being your guest to-day.'

'Well, it is rather awkward,' said Ferrars, 'but I could have no idea of this when you were so kind as to say you would come.'

'Oh, nothing of that sort,' said Sidney. 'I am out and you are in, and I hope you may be in for a long, long time. I dare say it may be so, and the Duke is the man of the age, as you always said he was. I hope your being in office is not to deprive me of your pleasant dinners; it would be too bad to lose my place both at Whitehall and in Hill Street.'

'I trust that will never happen, my dear fellow; but to-day I thought it might be embarrassing.'

'Not at all; I could endure without wincing even the trium-

phant glance of Zenobia. The fact is, I have some business of the most pressing nature which has suddenly arisen, and which demands my immediate attention.'

Ferrars expressed his regret, though in fact he was greatly relieved, and they parted.

Zenobia did dine with the William Ferrars to-day, and her handsome husband came with her, a knight of the garter, and just appointed to a high office in the household by the new government. Even the excitement of the hour did not disturb his indigenous repose. It was a dignified serenity, quite natural, and quite compatible with easy and even cordial manners, and an address always considerate even when not sympathetic. He was not a loud or a long talker, but his terse remarks were full of taste and a just appreciation of things. If they were sometimes trenchant, the blade was of fine temper. Old Mr. Ferrars was there and the Viscountess Edgware. His hair had become quite silvered, and his cheek rosy as a December apple. His hazel eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he remembered the family had now produced two privy councillors. Lord Pomeroy was there, the great lord who had returned William Ferrars to Parliament, a little man, quiet, shy, rather insignificant in appearance, but who observed everybody and everything; a conscientious man, who was always doing good, in silence and secrecy, and denounced as a boroughmonger, had never sold a seat in his life, and was always looking out for able men of character to introduce them to public affairs. It was not a formal party, but had grown up in great degree out of the circumstances of the moment. There were more men than women, and all men in office or devoted supporters of the new ministry.

Mrs. Ferrars, without being a regular beauty, had a voluptuous face and form. Her complexion was brilliant, with large and long-lashed eyes of blue. Her mouth was certainly too large, but the pouting richness of her lips and the splendour of her teeth baffled criticism. She was a woman who was always gorgeously or fantastically attired.

'I never can understand,' would sometimes observe Zenobia's husband to his brilliant spouse, 'how affairs are carried on in this world. Now we have, my dear, fifty thousand per annum; and I do not see how Ferrars can have much more than five; and yet he lives much as we do, perhaps better. I know Gibson showed me a horse last week that I very much wanted, but I would not give him two hundred guineas for it. I called there to-day to look after it again, for it would have suited me exactly, but I was told I was too late, and it was sold to Mrs. Ferrars.'

'My dear, you know I do not understand money matters,' Zenobia said in reply. 'I never could; but you should remember that old Ferrars must be very rich, and that William Ferrars is the most rising man of the day, and is sure to be in the Cabinet before he is forty.'

Everybody had an appetite for dinner to-day, and the dinner was worthy of the appetites. Zenobia's husband declared to himself that he never dined so well, though he gave his *chef* £500 a year, and old Lord Pomeroy, who had not yet admitted French wines to his own table, seemed quite abashed with the number of his wine-glasses and their various colours, and, as he tasted one succulent dish after another, felt a proud satisfaction in having introduced to public life so distinguished a man as William Ferrars.

With the dessert, not without some ceremony, were introduced the two most remarkable guests of the entertainment, and these were the twins; children of singular beauty, and dressed, if possible, more fancifully and brilliantly than their mamma. They resembled each other, and had the same brilliant complexions, rich chestnut hair, delicately arched brows, and dark blue eyes. Though only eight years of age, a most unchildlike self-possession distinguished them. The expression of their countenances was haughty, disdainful, and supercilious. Their beautiful features seemed quite unimpassioned, and they moved as if they expected everything to yield to them. The girl, whose long ringlets were braided with pearls, was ushered

to a seat next to her father, and, like her brother, who was placed by Mrs. Ferrars, was soon engaged in negligently tasting delicacies, while she seemed apparently unconscious of any one being present, except when she replied to those who addressed her with a stare and a haughty monosyllable. The boy, in a black velvet jacket with large Spanish buttons of silver filagree, a shirt of lace, and a waistcoat of white satin, replied with reserve, but some condescension, to the good-natured but half-humorous inquiries of the husband of Zenobia.

'And when do you go to school?' asked his lordship in a kind voice and with a laughing eye.

'I shall go to Eton in two years,' replied the child without the slightest emotion, and not withdrawing his attention from the grapes he was tasting, or even looking at his inquirer, 'and then I shall go to Christ Church, and then I shall go into Parliament.'

'Myra,' said an intimate of the family, a handsome private secretary of Mr. Ferrars, to the daughter of the house, as he supplied her plate with some choicest delicacies, 'I hope you have not forgotten your engagement to me which you made at Wimbledon two years ago?'

'What engagement?' she haughtily inquired.

'To marry me.'

'I should not think of marrying any one who was not in the House of Lords,' she replied, and she shot at him a glance of contempt.

The ladies rose. As they were ascending the stairs, one of them said to Mrs. Ferrars, 'Your son's name is very pretty, but it is very uncommon, is it not?'

''Tis a family name. The first Carey who bore it was a courtier of Charles the First, and we have never since been without it. William wanted our boy to be christened Pomeroy, but I was always resolved, if I ever had a son, that he should be named ENDYMION.'

CHAPTER IV.

About the time that the ladies rose from the dinner-table in Hill Street, Mr. Sidney Wilton entered the hall of the Clarendon Hotel, and murmured an inquiry of the porter. Whereupon a bell was rung, and soon a foreign servant appeared, and bowing, invited Mr. Wilton to ascend the staircase and follow him. Mr. Wilton was ushered through an ante-chamber into a room of some importance, lofty and decorated, and obviously adapted for distinguished guests. On a principal table a desk was open and many papers strewn about. Apparently some person had only recently been writing there. There were in the room several musical instruments; the piano was open, there was a harp and a guitar. The room was rather dimly lighted, but cheerful from the steady blaze of the fire, before which Mr. Wilton stood, not long alone, for an opposite door opened, and a lady advanced leading with her left hand a youth of interesting mien, and about twelve years of age. The lady was fair and singularly thin. It seemed that her delicate hand must really be transparent. Her cheek was sunk, but the expression of her large brown eyes was inexpressibly pleasing. She wore her own hair, once the most celebrated in Europe, and still uncovered. Though the prodigal richness of the tresses had disappeared, the arrangement was still striking from its grace. That rare quality pervaded the being of this lady, and it was impossible not to be struck with her carriage as she advanced to greet her guest; free from all affectation and yet full of movement and gestures, which might have been the study of painters.

'Ah!' she exclaimed as she gave him her hand, which he pressed to his lips, 'you are ever faithful.'

Seating themselves, she continued, 'You have not seen my boy since he sate upon your knee. Florestan, salute Mr. Wilton, your mother's most cherished friend.'

'This is a sudden arrival,' said Mr. Wilton.

'Well, they would not let us rest,' said the lady. 'Our only

refuge was Switzerland, but I cannot breathe among the mountains, and so, after a while, we stole to an obscure corner of the south, and for a time we were tranquil. But soon the old story: representations, remonstrances, warnings, and threats, appeals to Vienna, and lectures from Prince Metternich, not the less impressive because they were courteous, and even gallant.'

'And had nothing occurred to give a colour to such complaints? Or was it sheer persecution?'

'Well, you know,' replied the lady, 'we wished to remain quiet and obscure; but where the lad is, they will find him out. It often astonishes me. I believe if we were in the centre of a forest in some Indian isle, with no companions but monkeys and elephants, a secret agent would appear—some devoted victim of our family, prepared to restore our fortunes and renovate his own. I speak the truth to you always. I have never countenanced these people; I have never encouraged them; but it is impossible rudely to reject the sympathy of those who, after all, are your fellow-sufferers, and some of whom have given proof of even disinterested devotion. For my own part, I have never faltered in my faith, that Florestan would some day sit on the throne of his father, dark as appears to be our life; but I have never much believed that the great result could be occasioned or precipitated by intrigues, but rather by events more powerful than man, and led on by that fatality in which his father believed.'

'And now you think of remaining here?' said Mr. Wilton.

'No,' said the lady; 'that I cannot do. I love everything in this country except its climate and, perhaps, its hotels. I think of trying the south of Spain, and fancy, if quite alone, I might vegetate there unnoticed. I cannot bring myself altogether to quit Europe. I am, my dear Sidney, intensely European. But Spain is not exactly the country I should fix upon to form kings and statesmen. And this is the point on which I wish to consult you. I want Florestan to receive an English education, and I want you to put me in the way of accomplishing this. It might be convenient, under such cir-

cumstances, that he should not obtrude his birth—perhaps, that it should be concealed. He has many honourable names besides the one which indicates the state to which he was born. But, on all these points, we want your advice.' And she seemed to appeal to her son, who bowed his head with a slight smile, but did not speak.

Mr. Wilton expressed his deep interest in her wishes, and promised to consider how they might best be accomplished, and then the conversation took a more general tone.

'This change of government in your country,' said the lady, 'so unexpected, so utterly unforeseen, disturbs me; in fact, it decided my hesitating movements. I cannot but believe that the accession of the Duke of Wellington to power must be bad, at least, for us. It is essentially reactionary. They are triumphing at Vienna.'

'Have they cause?' said Mr. Wilton. 'I am an impartial witness, for I have no post in the new administration; but the leading colleagues of Mr. Canning form part of it, and the conduct of foreign affairs remains in the same hands.'

'That is consoling,' said the lady. 'I wonder if Lord Dudley would see me. Perhaps not. Ministers do not love pretenders. I knew him when I was not a pretender,' added the lady, with the sweetest of smiles, 'and thought him agreeable. He was witty. Ah! Sidney, those were happy days. I look back to the past with regret, but without remorse. One might have done more good, but one did some;' and she sighed.

'You seemed to me,' said Sidney with emotion, 'to diffuse benefits and blessings among all around you.'

'And I read,' said the lady, a little indignant, 'in some memoirs the other day, that our court was a corrupt and dissolute court. It was a court of pleasure, if you like; but of pleasure that animated and refined, and put the world in good humour, which, after all, is good government. The most corrupt and dissolute courts on the continent of Europe that I have known,' said the lady, 'have been outwardly the dullest and most decorous.'

'My memory of those days,' said Mr. Wilton, 'is of ceaseless grace and inexhaustible charm.'

'Well,' said the lady, 'if I sinned I have at least suffered. And I hope they were only sins of omission. I wanted to see everybody happy, and tried to make them so. But let us talk no more of ourselves. The unfortunate are always egotistical. Tell me something of Mr. Wilton; and, above all, tell me why you are not in the new government.'

'I have not been invited,' said Mr. Wilton. 'There are more claimants than can be satisfied, and my claims are not very strong. It is scarcely a disappointment to me. I shall continue in public life; but, so far as political responsibility is concerned, I would rather wait. I have some fancies on that head, but I will not trouble you with them. My time, therefore, is at my command; and so,' he added smilingly, 'I can attend to the education of Prince Florestan.'

'Do you hear that, Florestan?' said the lady to her son; 'I told you we had a friend. Thank Mr. Wilton.'

And the young Prince bowed as before, but with a more serious expression. He, however, said nothing.

'I see you have not forgotten your most delightful pursuit,' said Mr. Wilton, and he looked towards the musical instruments.

'No,' said the lady; 'throned or discrowned, music has ever been the charm or consolation of my life.'

'Pleasure should follow business,' said Mr. Wilton, 'and we have transacted ours. Would it be too bold if I asked again to hear those tones which have so often enchanted me?'

'My voice has not fallen off,' said the lady, 'for you know it was never first-rate. But they were kind enough to say it had some expression, probably because I generally sang my own words to my own music. I will sing you my farewell to Florestan,' she added gaily, and she took up her guitar, and then in tones of melancholy sweetness, breaking at last into a gushing burst of long-controlled affection, she expressed the agony and devotion of a mother's heart. Mr. Wilton was a little agitated; her son left the room. The mother turned round with a smiling

face, and said, 'The darling cannot bear to hear it, but I sing it on purpose, to prepare him for the inevitable.'

'He is soft-hearted,' said Mr. Wilton.

'He is the most affectionate of beings,' replied the mother. 'Affectionate and mysterious. I can say no more. I ought to tell you his character. I cannot. You may say he may have none. I do not know. He has abilities, for he acquires knowledge with facility, and knows a great deal for a boy. But he never gives an opinion. He is silent and solitary. Poor darling! he has rarely had companions, and that may be the cause. He seems to me always to be thinking.'

'Well, a public school will rouse him from his reveries,' said Mr. Wilton.

'As he is away at this moment, I will say that which I should not care to say before his face,' said the lady. 'You are about to do me a great service, not the first; and before I leave this, we may—we must—meet again more than once, but there is no time like the present. The separation between Florestan and myself may be final. It is sad to think of such things, but they must be thought of, for they are probable. I still look in a mirror, Sidney; I am not so frightened by what has occurred since we first met, to be afraid of that—but I never deceive myself. I do not know what may be the magical effect of the raisins of Malaga, but if it save my life the grape cure will indeed achieve a miracle. Do not look gloomy. Those who have known real grief seldom seem sad. I have been struggling with sorrow for ten years, but I have got through it with music and singing, and my boy. See now—he will be a source of expense, and it will not do for you to be looking to a woman for supplies. Women are generous, but not precise in money matters. I have some excuse, for the world has treated me not very well. I never got my pension regularly; now I never get it at all. So much for the treaties, but everybody laughs at them. Here is the fortune of Florestan, and I wish it all to be spent on his education,' and she took a case from her bosom. 'They are not the crown jewels, though.

The memoirs I was reading the other day say I ran away with them. That is false, like most things said of me. But these are gems of Golconda, which I wish you to realise and expend for his service. They were the gift of love, and they were worn in love.'

'It is unnecessary,' said Mr. Wilton, deprecating the offer by his attitude.

'Hush!' said the lady. 'I am still a sovereign to you, and I must be obeyed.'

Mr. Wilton took the case of jewels, pressed it to his lips, and then placed it in the breast pocket of his coat. He was about to retire, when the lady added, 'I must give you this copy of my song.'

'And you will write my name on it?'

'Certainly,' replied the lady, as she went to the table and wrote, 'For Mr. Sidney Wilton, from AGRIPPINA.'

CHAPTER V.

IN the meantime, power and prosperity clustered round the roof and family of Ferrars. He himself was in the prime of manhood, with an exalted position in the world of politics, and with a prospect of the highest. The Government of which he was a member was not only deemed strong, but eternal. The favour of the Court and the confidence of the country were alike lavished on it. The government of the Duke could only be measured by his life, and his influence was irresistible. It was a dictatorship of patriotism. The country, long accustomed to a strong and undisturbed administration, and frightened by the changes and catastrophes which had followed the retirement of Lord Liverpool, took refuge in the powerful will and splendid reputation of a real hero.

Mrs. Ferrars was as ambitious of social distinction as her

husband was of political power. She was a woman of taste, but of luxurious taste. She had a passion for splendour, which, though ever regulated by a fine perception of the fitness of things, was still costly. Though her mien was in general haughty, she flattered Zenobia, and consummately. Zenobia, who liked handsome people, even handsome women, and persons who were dressed beautifully, and delighted her eye by their grace and fine manners, was quite won by Mrs. Ferrars, against whom at first she was inclined to be a little prejudiced. There was an entire alliance between them, and though Mrs. Ferrars greatly influenced and almost ruled Zenobia, the wife of the minister was careful always to acknowledge the Queen of Fashion as her suzerain.

The great world then, compared with the huge society of the present period, was limited in its proportions, and composed of elements more refined though far less various. It consisted mainly of the great landed aristocracy, who had quite absorbed the nabobs of India, and had nearly appropriated the huge West Indian fortunes. Occasionally, an eminent banker or merchant invested a large portion of his accumulations in land, and in the purchase of parliamentary influence, and was in time duly admitted into the sanctuary. But those vast and successful invasions of society by new classes which have since occurred, though impending, had not yet commenced. The manufacturers, the railway kings, the colossal contractors, the discoverers of nuggets, had not yet found their place in society and the senate. There were then, perhaps, more great houses open than at the present day, but there were very few little ones. The necessity of providing regular occasions for the assembling of the miscellaneous world of fashion led to the institution of Almack's, which died out in the advent of the new system of society, and in the fierce competition of its inexhaustible private entertainments.

The season then was brilliant and sustained, but it was not flurried. People did not go to various parties on the same night. They remained where they were assembled, and, not being in a

hurry, were more agreeable than they are at the present day. Conversation was more cultivated; manners, though unconstrained, were more stately; and the world, being limited, knew itself much better. On the other hand, the sympathies of society were more contracted than they are at present. The pressure of population had not opened the heart of man. The world attended to its poor in its country parishes, and subscribed and danced for the Spitalfields weavers when their normal distress had overflowed, but their knowledge of the people did not exceed these bounds, and the people knew very little more about themselves. They were only half born.

The darkest hour precedes the dawn, and a period of unusual stillness often, perhaps usually, heralds the social convulsion. At this moment the general tranquillity and even content were remarkable. In politics the Whigs were quite prepared to extend to the Duke the same provisional confidence that had been accepted by Mr. Canning, and conciliation began to be an accepted phrase, which meant in practice some share on their part of the good things of the State. The country itself required nothing. There was a general impression, indeed, that they had been advancing at a rather rapid rate, and that it was as well that the reins should be entrusted to a wary driver. Zenobia, who represented society, was enraptured that the career of revolution had been stayed. She still mourned over the concession of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway in a moment of Liberal infatuation, but flattered herself that any extension of the railway system might certainly be arrested, and on this head the majority of society, perhaps even of the country, was certainly on her side.

'I have some good news for you,' said one of her young favourites as he attended her reception. 'We have prevented this morning the lighting of Grosvenor Square by gas by a large majority.'

'I felt confident that disgrace would never occur,' said Zenobia, triumphant. 'And by a large majority! I wonder how Lord Pomeroy voted.'

'Against us.'

'How can one save this country?' exclaimed Zenobia. 'I believe now the story that he has ordered Lady Pomeroy not to go to the Drawing Room in a sedan chair.'

One bright May morning in the spring that followed the formation of the government that was to last for ever, Mrs. Ferrars received the world at a fanciful entertainment in the beautiful grounds of her Wimbledon villa. The day was genial, the scene was flushed with roses and pink thorns, and brilliant groups, amid bursts of music, clustered and sauntered on the green turf of bowery lawns. Mrs. Ferrars, on a rustic throne, with the wondrous twins in still more wonderful attire, distributed alternate observations of sympathetic gaiety to a Russian Grand Duke and to the serene heir of a German principality. And yet there was really an expression on her countenance of restlessness, not to say anxiety, which ill accorded with the dulcet tones and the wreathed smiles which charmed her august companions. Zenobia, the great Zenobia, had not arrived, and the hours were advancing. The Grand Duke played with the beautiful and haughty infants, and the German Prince inquired of Endymion whether he were destined to be one of His Majesty's guards; but still Zenobia did not come, and Mrs. Ferrars could scarcely conceal her vexation. But there was no real occasion for it. For even at this moment, with avant-courier and outriders and badged postillions on her four horses of race, the lodge-gates were opening for the reception of the great lady, who herself soon appeared in the distance; and Mrs. Ferrars, accompanied by her distinguished guests, immediately rose and advanced to receive the Queen of Fashion. No one appreciated a royal presence more highly than Zenobia. It was her habit to impress upon her noble fellows of both sexes that there were relations of intimacy between herself and the royal houses of Europe, which were not shared by her class. She liked to play the part of a social mediator between the aristocracy and royal houses. A German Serenity was her delight, but a Russian Grand Duke was

her embodiment of power and pomp, and sound principles in their most authentic and orthodox form. And yet though she addressed their highnesses with her usual courtly vivacity, and poured forth inquiries which seemed to indicate the most familiar acquaintance with the latest incidents from Schönbrunn or the Rhine, though she embraced her hostess, and even kissed the children, the practised eye of Mrs. Ferrars, whose life was a study of Zenobia, detected that her late appearance had been occasioned by an important cause, and, what was more, that Zenobia was anxious to communicate it to her. With feminine tact Mrs. Ferrars moved on with her guests until the occasion offered when she could present some great ladies to the princes; and then dismissing the children on appropriate missions, she was not surprised when Zenobia immediately exclaimed: 'Thank heaven, we are at last alone! You must have been surprised I was so late. Well, guess what has happened?' and then as Mrs. Ferrars shook her head, she continued: 'They are all four out!'

'All four!'

'Yes; Lord Dudley, Lord Palmerston, and Charles Grant follow Huskisson. I do not believe the first ever meant to go, but the Duke would not listen to his hypocritical explanations, and the rest have followed. I am surprised about Lord Dudley, as I know he loved his office.'

'I am alarmed,' said Mrs. Ferrars.

'Not the slightest cause for fear,' exclaimed the intrepid Zenobia. 'It must have happened sooner or later. I am delighted at it. We shall now have a cabinet of our own. They never would have rested till they had brought in some Whigs, and the country hates the Whigs. No wonder, when we remember that if they had had their way we should have been wearing sabots at this time, with a French prefect probably in Holland House.'

'And whom will they put in the cabinet?' inquired Mrs. Ferrars.

'Our good friends, I hope,' said Zenobia, with an inspiring

smile; 'but I have heard nothing about that yet. I am a little sorry about Lord Dudley, as I think they have drawn him into their mesh; but as for the other three, especially Huskisson and Lord Palmerston, I can tell you the Duke has never had a quiet moment since they joined him. We shall now begin to reign. The only mistake was ever to have admitted them. I think now we have got rid of Liberalism for ever.'

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Ferrars did not become a cabinet minister, but this was a vexation rather than a disappointment, and transient. The unexpected vacancies were filled by unexpected personages. So great a change in the frame of the ministry, without any promotion for himself, was on the first impression not agreeable, but reflection and the sanguine wisdom of Zenobia soon convinced him that all was for the best, that the thought of such rapid preferment was unreasonable, and that time and the due season must inevitably bring all that he could desire, especially as any term to the duration of the ministry was not now to be foreseen: scarcely indeed possible. In short, it was shown to him that the Tory party, renovated and restored, had entered upon a new lease of authority, which would stamp its character on the remainder of the nineteenth century, as Mr. Pitt and his school had marked its earlier and memorable years.

And yet this very reconstruction of the government necessarily led to an incident which, in its consequences, changed the whole character of English politics, and commenced a series of revolutions which has not yet closed.

One of the new ministers who had been preferred to a place which Mr. Ferrars might have filled was an Irish gentleman, and a member for one of the most considerable counties in his country. He was a good speaker, and the government was de-

ficient in debating power in the House of Commons; he was popular and influential.

The return of a cabinet minister by a large constituency was more appreciated in the days of close boroughs than at present. There was a rumour that the new minister was to be opposed, but Zenobia laughed the rumour to scorn. As she irresistibly remarked at one of her evening gatherings, 'Every landowner in the county is in his favour; therefore it is impossible.' The statistics of Zenobia were quite correct, yet the result was different from what she anticipated. An Irish lawyer, a professional agitator, himself a Roman Catholic and therefore ineligible, announced himself as a candidate in opposition to the new minister, and on the day of election, thirty thousand peasants, setting at defiance all the landowners of the county, returned O'Connell at the head of the poll, and placed among not the least memorable of historical events—the Clare election.

This event did not, however, occur until the end of the year 1828, for the state of the law then prevented the writ from being moved until that time, and during the whole of that year the Ferrars family had pursued a course of unflagging display. Courage, expenditure, and tact combined, had realised almost the height of that social ambition to which Mrs. Ferrars soared. Even in the limited and exclusive circle which then prevailed, she began to be counted among the great dames. As for the twins, they seemed quite worthy of their beautiful and luxurious mother. Proud, wilful, and selfish, they had one redeeming quality, an intense affection for each other. The sister seemed to have the commanding spirit, for Endymion was calm, but if he were ruled by his sister, she was ever willing to be his slave, and to sacrifice every consideration to his caprice and his convenience.

The year 1829 was eventful, but to Ferrars more agitating than anxious. When it was first known that the head of the cabinet, whose colleague had been defeated at Clare, was himself about to propose the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, there was a thrill throughout the country; but after a time the success of the operation was not doubted, and was anticipated

as a fresh proof of the irresistible fortune of the heroic statesman. There was some popular discontent in the country at the proposal, but it was mainly organised and stimulated by the Dissenters, and that section of Churchmen who most resembled them. The High Church party, the descendants of the old connection which had rallied round Sacheverell, had subsided into formalism, and shrank from any very active co-operation with their evangelical brethren.

The English Church had no competent leaders among the clergy. The spirit that has animated and disturbed our latter times seemed quite dead, and no one anticipated its resurrection. The bishops had been selected from college dons, men profoundly ignorant of the condition and the wants of the country. To have edited a Greek play with second-rate success, or to have been the tutor of some considerable patrician, was the qualification then deemed desirable and sufficient for an office, which at this day is at least reserved for eloquence and energy. The social influence of the episcopal bench was nothing. A prelate was rarely seen in the saloons of Zenobia. It is since the depths of religious thought have been probed, and the influence of woman in the spread and sustenance of religious feeling has again been recognised, that fascinating and fashionable prelates have become favoured guests in the refined saloons of the mighty, and, while apparently indulging in the vanities of the hour, have re-established the influence which in old days guided a Matilda or the mother of Constantine.

The end of the year 1829, however, brought a private event of moment to the Ferrars family. The elder Mr. Ferrars died. The world observed at the time how deeply affected his son was at this event. The relations between father and son had always been commendable, but the world was hardly prepared for Mr. Ferrars, junior, being so entirely overwhelmed. It would seem that nothing but the duties of public life could have restored him to his friends, and even these duties he relinquished for an unusual time. The world was curious to know the amount of his inheritance, but the proof of the will was unusually delayed,

and public events soon occurred which alike consigned the will and the will-maker to oblivion.

CHAPTER VII.

The Duke of Wellington applied himself to the treatment of the critical circumstances of 1830 with that blended patience and quickness of perception to which he owed the success of many campaigns. Quite conscious of the difficulties he had to encounter, he was nevertheless full of confidence in his ability to control them. It is probable that the paramount desire of the Duke in his effort to confirm his power was to rally and restore the ranks of the Tory party, disturbed rather than broken up by the passing of the Relief Bill. During the very heat of the struggle it was significantly observed that the head of the powerful family of Lowther, in the House of Commons, was never asked to resign his office, although both himself and his following voted invariably against the Government measure. The order of the day was the utmost courtesy to the rebels, who were treated, as some alleged, with more consideration than the compliant. At the same time the desire of the Whigs to connect, perhaps even to merge themselves in the ministerial ranks, was not neglected. A Whig had been appointed to succeed the eccentric and too uncompromising Wetherell in the office of attorney-general, other posts had been placed at their disposal, and one even, an old companion in arms of the Duke, had entered the cabinet. The confidence in the Duke's star was not diminished, and under ordinary circumstances this balanced strategy would probably have been successful. But it was destined to cope with great and unexpected events.

The first was the unexpected demise of the crown. The death of King George the Fourth at the end of the month of June, according to the then existing constitution, necessitated a disso-

lution of parliament, and so deprived the minister of that invaluable quality of time, necessary to soften and win back his estranged friends. Nevertheless, it is not improbable, that the Duke might still have succeeded, had it not been for the occurrence of the French insurrection of 1830, in the very heat of the preparations for the general election in England. The Whigs, who found the Duke going to the country without that reconstruction of his ministry on which they had counted, saw their opportunity and seized it. The triumphant riots of Paris were dignified into 'the three glorious days,' and the three glorious days were universally recognised as the triumph of civil and religious liberty. The names of Polignac and Wellington were adroitly connected together, and the phrase Parliamentary Reform began to circulate.

It was Zenobia's last reception for the season; on the morrow she was about to depart for her county, and canvass for her candidates. She was still undaunted, and never more inspiring. The excitement of the times was reflected in her manner. She addressed her arriving guests as they made their obeisance to her, asked for news and imparted it before she could be answered, declared that nothing had been more critical since '93, that there was only one man who was able to deal with the situation, and thanked Heaven he was not only in England, but in her drawing-room.

Ferrars, who had been dining with his patron, Lord Pomeroy, and had the satisfaction of feeling, that at any rate his return to the new parliament was certain, while helping himself to coffee could not refrain from saying in a low tone to a gentleman who was performing the same office, 'Our Whig friends seem in high spirits, baron.'

The gentleman thus addressed was Baron Sergius, a man of middle age. His countenance was singularly intelligent, tempered with an expression mild and winning. He had attended the Congress of Vienna to represent a fallen party, a difficult and ungracious task, but he had shown such high qualities in the fulfilment of his painful duties—so much knowledge, so

much self-control, and so much wise and unaffected conciliation —that he had won universal respect, and especially with the English plenipotentiaries, so that when he visited England, which he did frequently, the houses of both parties were open to him, and he was as intimate with the Whigs as he was with the great Duke, by whom he was highly esteemed.

'As we have got our coffee, let us sit down,' said the baron, and they withdrew to a settee against the wall.

'You know I am a Liberal, and have always been a Liberal,' said the baron; 'I know the value of civil and religious liberty, for I was born in a country where we had neither, and where we have since enjoyed either very fitfully. Nothing can be much drearier than the present lot of my country, and it is probable that these doings at Paris may help my friends a little, and they may again hold up their heads for a time; but I have seen too much, and am too old, to indulge in dreams. You are a young man and will live to see what I can only predict. The world is thinking of something else than civil and religious liberty. Those are phrases of the eighteenth century. The men who have won these 'three glorious days' at Paris, want neither civilisation nor religion. They will not be content till they have destroyed both. It is possible that they may be parried for a time; that the adroit wisdom of the house of Orleans, guided by Talleyrand, may give this movement the resemblance, and even the character, of a middle-class revolution. It is no such thing; the barricades were not erected by the middle class. I know these people; it is a fraternity, not a nation. Europe is honeycombed with their secret societies. They are spread all over Spain. Italy is entirely mined. I know more of the southern than the northern nations; but I have been assured by one who should know that the brotherhood are organised throughout Germany and even in Russia. I have spoken to the Duke about these things. He is not indifferent, or altogether incredulous, but he is so essentially practical that he can only deal with what he sees. I have spoken to the Whig leaders. They tell me that there is only one specific, and that a complete

one—constitutional government; that with representative institutions, secret societies cannot co-exist. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that with these secret societies representative institutions rather will disappear.'

CHAPTER VIII.

What unexpectedly took place in the southern part of England, and especially in the maritime counties, during the autumn of 1830, seemed rather to confirm the intimations of Baron Sergius. The people in the rural districts had become disaffected. Their discontent was generally attributed to the abuses of the Poor Law, and to the lowness of their wages. But the abuses of the Poor Law, though intolerable, were generally in favour of the labourer, and though wages in some parts were unquestionably low, it was observed that the tumultuous assemblies, ending frequently in riot, were held in districts where this cause did not prevail. The most fearful feature of the approaching anarchy was the frequent acts of incendiaries. The blazing homesteads baffled the feeble police and the helpless magistrates; and the government had reason to believe that foreign agents were actively promoting these mysterious crimes.

Amid partial discontent and general dejection came the crash of the Wellington ministry, and it required all the inspiration of Zenobia to sustain William Ferrars under the trial. But she was undaunted and sanguine as a morning in spring. Nothing could persuade her that the Whigs could ever form a government, and she was quite sure that the clerks in the public offices alone could turn them out. When the Whig government was formed, and its terrible programme announced, she laughed it to scorn, and derided with inexhaustible merriment the idea of the House of Commons passing a Reform Bill. She held a great assembly the night that General Gascoyne defeated the first

measure, and passed an evening of ecstasy in giving and receiving congratulations. The morrow brought a graver brow, but still an indomitable spirit, and through all these tempestuous times Zenobia never quailed, though mobs burnt the castles of dukes and the palaces of bishops.

Serious as was the state of affairs to William Ferrars, his condition was not so desperate as that of some of his friends. His seat at least was safe in the new parliament that was to pass a Reform Bill. As for the Tories generally, they were swept off the board. Scarcely a constituency, in which was a popular element, was faithful to them. The counties in those days were the great expounders of popular principles, and whenever England was excited, which was rare, she spoke through her freeholders. In this instance almost every Tory knight of the shire lost his seat except Lord Chandos, the member for Buckinghamshire, who owed his success entirely to his personal popularity. 'Never mind,' said Zenobia, 'what does it signify? The Lords will throw it out.'

And bravely and unceasingly she worked for this end. To assist this purpose it was necessary that a lengthened and powerful resistance to the measure should be made in the Commons; that the public mind should be impressed with its dangerous principles, and its promoters cheapened by the exposure of their corrupt arrangements and their inaccurate details. It must be confessed that these objects were resolutely kept in view, and that the Tory opposition evinced energy and abilities not unworthy of a great parliamentary occasion. Ferrars particularly distinguished himself. He rose immensely in the estimation of the House, and soon the public began to talk of him. His statistics about the condemned boroughs were astounding and unanswerable: he was the only man who seemed to know anything of the elements of the new ones. He was as eloquent too as exact,—sometimes as fervent as Burke, and always as accurate as Cocker.

'I never thought it was in William Ferrars,' said a member, musingly, to a companion as they walked home one night; 'I

always thought him a good man of business, and all that sort of thing—but, somehow or other, I did not think this was in him.'

'Well, he has a good deal at stake, and that brings it out of a fellow,' said his friend.

It was, however, pouring water upon sand. Any substantial resistance to the measure was from the first out of the question. Lord Chandos accomplished the only important feat, and that was the enfranchisement of the farmers. This perpetual struggle, however, occasioned a vast deal of excitement, and the actors in it often indulged in the wild credulity of impossible expectations. The saloon of Zenobia was ever thronged, and she was never more confident than when the bill passed the Commons. She knew that the King would never give his assent to the bill. His Majesty had had quite enough of going down in hackney coaches to carry revolutions. After all, he was the son of good King George, and the court would save the country, as it had often done before. 'But it will not come to that,' she added. 'The Lords will do their duty.'

'But Lord Waverley tells me,' said Ferrars, 'that there are forty of them who were against the bill last year who will vote for the second reading.'

'Never mind Lord Waverley and such addlebrains,' said Zenobia, with a smile of triumphant mystery. 'So long as we have the court, the Duke, and Lord Lyndhurst on our side, we can afford to laugh at such conceited poltroons. His mother was my dearest friend, and I know he used to have fits. Look bright,' she continued; 'things never were better. Before a week has passed these people will be nowhere.'

'But how is it possible?'

'Trust me.'

'I always do—and yet'——

'You never were nearer being a cabinet minister,' she said, with a radiant glance.

And Zenobia was right. Though the government, with the aid of the waverers, carried the second reading of the bill, a

week afterwards, on May 7, Lord Lyndhurst rallied the waverers again to his standard and carried his famous resolution, that the enfranchising clauses should precede the disfranchisement in the great measure. Lord Grey and his colleagues resigned, and the King sent for Lord Lyndhurst. The bold chief baron advised His Majesty to consult the Duke of Wellington, and was himself the bearer of the King's message to Apsley House. The Duke found the King 'in great distress,' and he therefore did not hesitate in promising to endeavour to form a ministry.

'Who was right?' said Zenobia to Mr. Ferrars. 'He is so busy he could not write to you, but he told me to tell you to call at Apsley House at twelve to-morrow. You will be in the cabinet.'

'I have got it at last!' said Ferrars to himself. 'It is worth living for and at any peril. All the cares of life sink into insignificance under such circumstances. The difficulties are great, but their very greatness will furnish the means of their solution. The Crown cannot be dragged in the mud, and the Duke was born for conquest.'

A day passed, and another day, and Ferrars was not again summoned. The affair seemed to hang fire. Zenobia was still brave, but Ferrars, who knew her thoroughly, could detect her lurking anxiety. Then she told him in confidence that Sir Robert made difficulties, 'but there is nothing in it,' she added. 'The Duke has provided for everything, and he means Sir Robert to be Premier. He could not refuse that; it would be almost an act of treason.' Two days after she sent for Mr. Ferrars, early in the morning, and received him in her boudoir. Her countenance was excited, but serious. 'Don't be alarmed,' she said; 'nothing will prevent a government being formed, but Sir Robert has thrown us over; I never had confidence in him. It is most provoking, as Mr. Baring had joined us, and it was such a good name for the City. But the failure of one man is the opportunity of another. We want a leader in the House of Commons. He must be a man who can speak; of

experience, who knows the House, its forms, and all that. There is only one man indicated. You cannot doubt about him. I told you honours would be tumbling on your head. You are the man; you are to have one of the highest offices in the cabinet, and lead the House of Commons.'

'Peel declines,' said Ferrars, speaking slowly and shaking his head. 'That is very serious.'

'For himself,' said Zenobia, 'not for you. It makes your fortune.'

'The difficulties seem too great to contend with.'

'What difficulties are there? You have got the court, and you have got the House of Lords. Mr. Pitt was not nearly so well off, for he had never been in office, and had at the same time to fight Lord North and that wicked Mr. Fox, the orator of the day, while you have only got Lord Althorp, who can't order his own dinner.'

'I am in amazement,' said Ferrars, and he seemed plunged in thought.

'But you do not hesitate?'

'No,' he said, looking up dreamily, for he had been lost in abstraction; and speaking in a measured and hollow voice, 'I do not hesitate.' Then resuming a brisk tone he said, 'This is not an age for hesitation; if asked, I will do the deed.'

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and the groom of the chambers brought in a note for Mr. Ferrars, which had been forwarded from his own residence, and which requested his presence at Apsley House. Having read it, he gave it to Zenobia, who exclaimed with delight, 'Do not lose a moment. I am so glad to have got rid of Sir Robert with his doubts and his difficulties. We want new blood.'

That was a wonderful walk for William Ferrars, from St. James' Square to Apsley House. As he moved along, he was testing his courage and capacity for the sharp trials that awaited him. He felt himself not unequal to conjunctures in which he had never previously indulged even in imagination. His had been an ambitious, rather than a soaring spirit. He had never

contemplated the possession of power except under the ægis of some commanding chief. Now it was for him to control senates and guide councils. He screwed himself up to the sticking-point. Desperation is sometimes as powerful an inspirer as genius.

The great man was alone,—calm, easy, and courteous. He had sent for Mr. Ferrars, because having had one interview with him, in which his co-operation had been requested in the conduct of affairs, the Duke thought it was due to him to give him the earliest intimation of the change of circumstances. The vote of the House of Commons on the motion of Lord Ebrington had placed an insurmountable barrier to the formation of a government, and his Grace had accordingly relinquished the commission with which he had been entrusted by the King.

CHAPTER IX.

Availing himself of his latch-key, Ferrars re-entered his home unnoticed. He went at once to his library, and locked the door of the apartment. There sitting before his desk, he buried his face in his hands and remained in that posture for a considerable time.

They were tumultuous and awful thoughts that passed over his brain. The dreams of a life were dissipated, and he had to encounter the stern reality of his position—and that was Ruin. He was without hope and without resource. His debts were vast; his patrimony was a fable; and the mysterious inheritance of his wife had been tampered with. The elder Ferrars had left an insolvent estate; he had supported his son liberally, but latterly from his son's own resources. The father had made himself the principal trustee of the son's marriage settlement. His colleague, a relative of the heiress, had died, and care was taken that no one should be substituted in his stead. All this

had been discovered by Ferrars on his father's death, but ambition, and the excitement of a life of blended elation and peril, had sustained him under the concussion. One by one every chance had vanished: first his private means and then his public prospects; he had lost office, and now he was about to lose parliament. His whole position, so long, and carefully, and skilfully built up, seemed to dissolve and dissipate into insignificant fragments. And now he had to break the situation to his wife. She was to become the unprepared partner of the secret which had gnawed at his heart for years, during which to her his mien had often been smiling and always serene. Mrs. Ferrars was at home, and alone, in her luxurious boudoir, and he went to her at once. After years of dissimulation, now that all was over, Ferrars could not bear the suspense of four-and-twenty hours.

It was difficult to bring her into a mood of mind capable of comprehending a tithe of what she had to learn; and yet the darkest part of the tale she was never to know. Mrs. Ferrars, though singularly intuitive, shrank from controversy, and settled everything by contradiction and assertion. She maintained for a long time that what her husband communicated to her could not be; that it was absurd and even impossible. After a while, she talked of selling her diamonds and reducing her equipages, sacrificing which she assumed would put everything right. And when she found her husband still grave and still intimating that the sacrifices must be beyond all this, and that they must prepare for the life and habits of another social sphere, she became violent, and wept and declared her wrongs; that she had been deceived and outraged and infamously treated.

Remembering how long and with what apparent serenity in her presence he had endured his secret woes, and how one of the principal objects of his life had ever been to guard her even from a shade of solicitude, even the restrained Ferrars was affected; his countenance changed and his eye became suffused. When she observed this, she suddenly threw her arms round his neck and with many embraces, amid sighs and tears, exclaimed,

'O William! if we love each other, what does anything signify?'

And what could anything signify under such circumstances and on such conditions? As Ferrars pressed his beautiful wife to his heart, he remembered only his early love, which seemed entirely to revive. Unconsciously to himself, too, he was greatly relieved by this burst of tenderness on her part, for the prospect of this interview had been most distressful to him. 'My darling,' he said, 'ours is not a case of common imprudence or misfortune. We are the victims of a revolution, and we must bear our lot as becomes us under such circumstances. Individual misfortunes are merged in the greater catastrophe of the country.'

'That is the true view,' said his wife; 'and, after all, the poor King of France is much worse off than we are. However, I cannot now buy the Duchesse of Sevres' lace, which I had promised her to do. It is rather awkward. However, the best way always is to speak the truth. I must tell the duchess I am powerless, and that we are the victims of a revolution, like herself.'

Then they began to talk quite cosily together over their prospects, he sitting on the sofa by her side and holding her hand. Mrs. Ferrars would not hear of retiring to the continent. 'No,' she said, with all her sanguine vein returning, 'you always used to say I brought you luck, and I will bring you luck yet. There must be a reaction. The wheel will turn and bring round our friends again. Do not let us then be out of the way. Your claims are immense. They must do something for you. They ought to give you India, and if we only set our mind upon it, we shall get it. Depend upon it, things are not so bad as they seem. What appear to be calamities are often the sources of fortune. I would much sooner that you should be Governor-General than a cabinet minister. That odious House of Commons is very wearisome. I am not sure any constitution can bear it very long. I am not sure whether I would not prefer being Governor-General of India even to being Prime Minister.'

CHAPTER X.

In consequence of the registration under the Reform Act it was not possible for parliament to be dissolved, and an appeal made to the new constituency, until the end of the year. This was advantageous to Mr. Ferrars, and afforded him six months of personal security to arrange his affairs. Both husband and wife were proud, and were anxious to quit the world with dignity. All were so busy about themselves at that period, and the vicissitudes of life between continental revolutions and English reform so various and extensive, that it was not difficult to avoid the scrutiny of society. Mrs. Ferrars broke to Zenobia that, as her husband was no longer to be in parliament, they had resolved to retire for some time to a country life, though, as Mr. Ferrars had at length succeeded in impressing on his wife that their future income was to be counted by hundreds, instead of thousands, it was difficult for her to realise a rural establishment that should combine dignity and economy. Without, however, absolutely alleging the cause, she contrived to baffle the various propositions of this kind which the energetic Zenobia made to her, and while she listened with apparent interest to accounts of deer parks, and extensive shooting, and delightful neighbourhoods, would just exclaim, 'Charming! but rather more, I fancy, than we require, for we mean to be very quiet till my girl is presented.'

That young lady was now thirteen, and though her parents were careful to say nothing in her presence which would materially reveal their real situation, for which they intended very gradually to prepare her, the scrutinising powers with which nature had prodigally invested their daughter were not easily baffled. She asked no questions, but nothing seemed to escape the penetrative glance of that dark blue eye, calm amid all the mystery, and tolerating rather than sharing the frequent embrace of her parents. After a while her brother came home from Eton, to which he was never to return. A few days

before this event she became unusually restless, and even agitated. When he arrived, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ferrars was at home. He knocked gaily at the door, a schoolboy's knock, and was hardly in the hall when his name was called, and he caught the face of his sister, leaning over the balustrade of the landing-place. He ran upstairs with wondrous speed, and was in an instant locked in her arms. She kissed him and kissed him again, and when he tried to speak, she stopped his mouth with kisses. And then she said, 'Something has happened. What it is I cannot make out, but we are to have no more ponies.'

CHAPTER XI.

At the foot of the Berkshire downs, and itself on a gentle elevation, there is an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows, standing in grounds which once were stately, and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. In the front of the hall huge gates of iron, highly wrought, and bearing an ancient date as well as the shield of a noble house, opened on a village green, round which were clustered the cottages of the parish with only one exception, and that was the vicarage house, a modern building, not without taste, and surrounded by a small but brilliant garden. The church was contiguous to the hall, and had been raised by the lord on a portion of his domain. Behind the hall and its enclosure, the country was common land but picturesque. It had once been a beech forest, and though the timber had been greatly cleared, the green land was still occasionally dotted, sometimes with groups and sometimes with single trees, while the juniper which here abounded, and rose to a great height, gave a rich wildness to the scene, and sustained its forest character.

Hurstley had for many years been deserted by the family to which it belonged. Indeed, it was rather difficult to say to

whom it did belong. A dreary fate had awaited an ancient, and, in its time, even not immemorable home. It had fallen into chancery, and for the last half-century had either been uninhabited or let to strangers. Mr. Ferrars' lawyer was in the chancery suit, and knew all about it. The difficulty of finding a tenant for such a place, never easy, was increased by its remoteness from any railway communication, which was now beginning to figure as an important element in such arrangements. The Master in Chancery would be satisfied with a nominal rent, provided only he could obtain a family of consideration to hold under him. Mr. Ferrars was persuaded to go down alone to reconnoitre the place. It pleased him. It was aristocratic, yet singularly inexpensive. The house contained an immense hall, which reached the roof, and which would have become a baronial mansion, and a vast staircase in keeping; but the living rooms were moderate, even small, in dimensions, and not numerous. The land he was expected to take consisted only of a few meadows, which he could let if necessary, and a single labourer could manage the garden.

Mrs. Ferrars was so delighted with the description of the galleried hall, that she resolved on their taking Hurstley without even her previously visiting it. The only things she cared for in the country were a hall and a pony-chair.

All the carriages were sold, and all the servants discharged. Two or three maid-servants and a man who must be found in the country, who could attend them at table, and valet alike his master and the pony, was the establishment which was to succeed the crowd of retainers who had so long lounged away their lives in the saloons of Hill Street, and the groves and gardens of Wimbledon.

Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars and their daughter travelled down to Hurstley in a post-chaise; Endymion, with the servants, was sent by the stage-coach, which accomplished the journey of sixty miles in ten hours. Myra said little during the journey, but an expression of ineffable contempt and disgust seemed permanent on her countenance. Sometimes she shrugged her

shoulders, sometimes she raised her eyebrows, and sometimes she turned up her nose. And then she gave a sigh; but it was a sigh not of sorrow, but of impatience. Her parents lavished attentions on her which she accepted without recognition, only occasionally observing that she wished she had gone with Endymion.

It was dusk when they arrived at Hurstley, and the melancholy hour did not tend to raise their spirits. However, the gardener's wife had lit a good fire of beechwood in the drawing-room, and threw as they entered a pannier of cones upon the logs, which crackled and cheerfully blazed away. Even Myra seemed interested by the novelty of the wood fire and the iron dogs. She remained by their side, looking abstractedly on the expiring logs, while her parents wandered about the house and examined or prepared the requisite arrangements. While they were yet absent, there was some noise and a considerable bustle in the hall. Endymion and his retinue had arrived. Then Myra immediately roused herself, and listened like a startled deer. But the moment she caught his voice, an expression of rapture suffused her countenance. It beamed with vivacity and delight. She rushed away, pushed through the servants and the luggage, embraced him and said, 'We will go over the house and see our rooms together.'

Wandering without a guide and making many mistakes, fortunately they soon met their parents. Mrs. Ferrars good-naturedly recommenced her labours of inspection, and explained all her plans. There was a very pretty room for Endymion, and to-morrow it was to be very comfortable. He was quite pleased. Then they were shown Myra's room, but she said nothing, standing by with a sweet scoff, as it were, lingering on her lips, while her mother disserted on all the excellences of the chamber. Then they were summoned to tea. The gardener's wife was quite a leading spirit, and had prepared everything; the curtains were drawn, and the room lighted; an urn hissed; there were piles of bread and butter and a pyramid of buttered toast. It was wonderful what an air of comfort had been conjured up in

this dreary mansion, and it was impossible for the travellers, however wearied or chagrined, to be insensible to the convenience and cheerfulness of all around them.

When the meal was over, the children sate together in whispering tattle. Mrs. Ferrars had left the room to see if all was ready for their hour of retirement, and Mrs. Ferrars was walking up and down the room, absorbed in thought.

'What do you think of it all, Endymion?' whispered Myra to her twin.

'I rather like it,' he replied.

She looked at him with a glance of blended love and mockery, and then she said in his ear, 'I feel as if we had fallen from some star.'

CHAPTER XII.

The morrow brought a bright autumnal morn, and every one woke, if not happy, interested. There was much to see and much to do. The dew was so heavy that the children were not allowed to quit the broad gravel walk that bounded one side of the old house, but they caught enticing vistas of the gleamy glades, and the abounding light and shade softened and adorned everything. Every sight and sound too was novel, and from the rabbit that started out of the grove, stared at them and then disappeared, to the jays chattering in the more distant woods, all was wonderment at least for a week. They saw squirrels for the first time, and for the first time beheld a hedgehog. Their parents were busy in the house; Mr. Ferrars unpacking and settling his books, and his wife arranging some few articles of ornamental furniture that had been saved from the London wreck, and rendering their usual room of residence as refined as was in her power. It is astonishing how much effect a woman of taste can produce with a pretty chair or two full of fancy and colour, a table clothed with a few books, some

family miniatures, a workbag of rich material, and some toys that we never desert. 'I have not much to work with,' said Mrs. Ferrars, with a sigh, 'but I think the colouring is pretty.'

On the second day after their arrival, the rector and his wife made them a visit. Mr. Penruddock was a naturalist, and had written the history of his parish. He had escaped being an Oxford don by being preferred early to this college living, but he had married the daughter of a don, who appreciated the grand manners of their new acquaintances, and who, when she had overcome their first rather awe-inspiring impression, became communicative and amused them much with her details respecting the little world in which they were now to live. She could not conceal her wonderment at the beauty of the twins, though they were no longer habited in those dresses which had once astonished even Mayfair.

Part of the scheme of the new life was the education of the children by their parents. Mr. Ferrars had been a distinguished scholar, and was still a good one. He was patient and methodical, and deeply interested in his contemplated task. So far as disposition was concerned the pupil was not disappointing. Endymion was of an affectionate disposition and inclined to treat his father with deference. He was gentle and docile; but he did not acquire knowledge with facility, and was remarkably deficient in that previous information on which his father counted. The other pupil was of a different temperament. She learned with a glance, and remembered with extraordinary tenacity everything she had acquired. But she was neither tender nor deferential, and to induce her to study you could not depend on the affections, but only on her intelligence. So she was often fitful, capricious, or provoking, and her mother, who, though accomplished and eager, had neither the method nor the self-restraint of Mr. Ferrars, was often annoyed and irritable. Then there was scenes, or rather ebullitions on one side, for Myra were always unmoved and enraging from her total want of sensibility. Sometimes it became necessary to appeal to Mr. Ferrars, and her manner to her father, though devoid of feeling,

was at least not contemptuous. Nevertheless, on the whole the scheme, as time went on, promised to be not unsuccessful. Endymion, though not rapidly, advanced surely, and made some amends for the years that had been wasted in fashionable private schools and the then frivolity of Eton. Myra, who, notwithstanding her early days of indulgence, had enjoyed the advantage of admirable governesses, was well grounded in more than one modern language, and she soon mastered them. And in due time, though much after the period on which we are now touching, she announced her desire to become acquainted with German, in those days a much rarer acquirement than at present. Her mother could not help her in this respect, and that was perhaps an additional reason for the study of this tongue, for Myra was impatient of tuition, and not unjustly full of self-confidence. She took also the keenest interest in the progress of her brother, made herself acquainted with all his lessons, and sometimes helped him in their achievement.

Though they had absolutely no acquaintance of any kind except the rector and his family, life was not dull. Mr. Ferrars was always employed, for besides the education of his children, he had systematically resumed a habit in which he had before occasionally indulged, and that was political composition. He had in his lofty days been the author of more than one essay, in the most celebrated periodical publication of the Tories, which had commanded attention and obtained celebrity. Many a public man of high rank and reputation, and even more than one Prime Minister, had contributed in their time to its famous pages, but never without being paid. It was the organic law of this publication, that gratuitous contributions should never be admitted. And in this principle there was as much wisdom as pride. Celebrated statesmen would point with complacency to the snuff-box or the picture which had been purchased by their literary labour, and there was more than one bracelet on the arm of Mrs. Ferrars, and more than one genet in her stable, which had been the reward of a profound or a slashing article by William.

What had been the occasional diversion of political life was now to be the source of regular income. Though living in profound solitude, Ferrars had a vast sum of political experience to draw upon, and though his training and general intelligence were in reality too exclusive and academical for the stirring age which had now opened, and on which he had unhappily fallen, they nevertheless suited the audience to which they were particularly addressed. His Corinthian style, in which the Mænad of Mr. Burke was habited in the last mode of Almack's, his sarcasms against the illiterate and his invectives against the low, his descriptions of the country life of the aristocracy contrasted with the horrors of the guillotine, his Horatian allusions and his Virgilian passages, combined to produce a whole which equally fascinated and alarmed his readers.

These contributions occasioned some communications with the editor or publisher of the Review, which were not without interest. Parcels came down by the coach, enclosing not merely proof sheets, but frequently new books—the pamphlet of the hour before it was published, or a volume of discoveries in unknown lands. It was a link to the world they had quitted without any painful associations. Otherwise their communications with the outer world were slight and rare. It is difficult for us, who live in an age of railroads, telegraphs, penny posts and penny newspapers, to realise how uneventful, how limited in thought and feeling, as well as in incident, was the life of an English family of retired habits and limited means, only forty years ago. The whole world seemed to be morally, as well as materially, 'adscripti glebæ.'

Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars did not wish to move, but had they so wished, it would have been under any circumstances for them a laborious and costly affair. The only newspaper they saw was the 'Evening Mail,' which arrived three times a week, and was the 'Times' newspaper with all its contents except its advertisements. As the 'Times' newspaper had the credit of mainly contributing to the passing of Lord Grey's Reform Bill, and was then whispered to enjoy the incredible sale of twelve thousand

copies daily, Mr. Ferrars assumed that in its columns he would trace the most authentic intimations of coming events. The cost of postage was then so heavy, that domestic correspondence was necessarily very restricted. But this vexatious limitation hardly applied to the Ferrars. They had never paid postage. They were born and had always lived in the franking world, and although Mr. Ferrars had now himself lost the privilege, both official and parliamentary, still all their correspondents were frankers, and they addressed their replies without compunction to those who were free. Nevertheless, it was astonishing how little in their new life they cared to avail themselves of this correspondence. At first Zenobia wrote every week, almost every day, to Mrs. Ferrars, but after a time Mrs. Ferrars, though at first pleased by the attention, felt its recognition a burthen. Then Zenobia, who at length, for the first time in her life, had taken a gloomy view of affairs, relapsed into a long silence, and in fact had nearly forgotten the Ferrars, for as she herself used to say, 'How can one recollect people whom one never meets?'

In the meantime, for we have been a little anticipating in our last remarks, the family at Hurstley were much pleased with the country they now inhabited. They made excursions of discovery into the interior of their world, Mrs. Ferrars and Myra in the pony-chair, her husband and Endymion walking by their side, and Endymion sometimes taking his sister's seat against his wish, but in deference to her irresistible will. Even Myra could hardly be insensible to the sylvan wildness of the old chase, and the romantic villages in the wooded clefts of the downs. As for Endymion he was delighted, and it seemed to him, perhaps he unconsciously felt it, that this larger and more frequent experience of nature was a compensation for much which they had lost.

After a time, when they had become a little acquainted with their simple neighbourhood, and the first impression of wildness and novelty had worn out, the twins were permitted to walk together alone, though within certain limits. The village and

its vicinity was quite free, but they were not permitted to enter the woods, and not to wander on the chase out of sight of the mansion. These walks alone with Endymion were the greatest pleasure of his sister. She delighted to make him tell her of his life at Eton, and if she ever sighed it was when she lamented that his residence there had been so short. Then they found an inexhaustible fund of interest and sympathy in the past. They wondered if they ever should have ponies again. 'I think not,' said Myra, 'and yet how merry to scamper together over this chase!'

'But they would not let us go,' said Endymion, 'without a groom.'

'A groom!' exclaimed Myra, with an elfish laugh; 'I believe, if the truth were really known, we ought to be making our own beds and washing our own dinner plates.'

'And are you sorry, Myra, for all that has happened?' asked Endymion.

'I hardly know what has happened. They keep it very close. But I am too astonished to be sorry. Besides, what is the use of whimpering?'

'I cried very much one day,' said Endymion.

'Ah, you are soft, dear darling. I never cried in my life, except once with rage.'

At Christmas a new character appeared on the stage, the rector's son, Nigel. He had completed a year with a private tutor, and was on the eve of commencing his first term at Oxford, being eighteen, nearly five years older than the twins. He was tall, with a countenance of remarkable intelligence and power, though still softened by the innocence and bloom of boyhood. He was destined to be a clergyman. The twins were often thrown into his society, for though too old to be their mere companion, his presence was an excuse for Mrs. Penruddock more frequently joining them in their strolls, and under her auspices their wanderings had no limit, except the shortness of the days; but they found some compensation for this in their frequent visits to the rectory, which was a cheerful and agree-

able home, full of stuffed birds, and dried plants, and marvellous fishes, and other innocent trophies and triumphs over nature.

CHAPTER XIII.

The tenant of the Manor Farm was a good specimen of his class; a thorough Saxon, ruddy and bright visaged, with an athletic though rather bulky frame, hardened by exposure to the seasons and constant exercise. Although he was the tenant of several hundred acres, he had an eye to the main chance in little things, which is a characteristic of farmers, but he was good-natured and obliging, and while he foraged their pony, furnished their woodyard with logs and faggots, and supplied them from his dairy, he gratuitously performed for the family at the hall many other offices which tended to their comfort and convenience, but which cost him nothing.

Mr. Ferrars liked to have a chat every now and then with Farmer Thornberry, who had a shrewd and idiomatic style of expressing his limited, but in its way complete, experience of men and things, which was amusing and interesting to a man of the world whose knowledge of rural life was mainly derived from grand shooting parties at great houses.

The pride and torment of Farmer Thornberry's life was his only child, Job.

'I gave him the best of educations,' said the farmer; 'he had a much better chance than I had myself, for I do not pretend to be a scholar, and never was; and yet I cannot make head or tail of him. I wish you would speak to him some day, sir. He goes against the land, and yet we have been on it for three generations, and have nothing to complain of; and he is a good farmer, too, is Job, none better; a little too fond of experimenting, but then he is young. But I am very much afraid he will leave me. I think it is this new thing the big-wigs have set up

in London that has put him wrong, for he is always reading their papers.'

'And what is that?' said Mr. Ferrars.

'Well, they call themselves the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, and Lord Brougham is at the head of it.'

'Ah! he is a dangerous man,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'Do you know, I think he is,' said Farmer Thornberry, very seriously, 'and by this token, he says a knowledge of chemistry is necessary for the cultivation of the soil.'

'Brougham is a man who would say anything,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and of one thing you may be quite certain, that there is no subject which Lord Brougham knows thoroughly. I have proved that, and if you ever have time some winter evening to read something on the matter, I will lend you a number of the 'Quarterly Review,' which might interest you.'

'I wish you would lend it to Job,' said the farmer.

Mr. Ferrars found Job not so manageable in controversy as his father. His views were peculiar, and his conclusions certain. He had more than a smattering too of political economy, a kind of knowledge which Mr. Ferrars viewed with suspicion; for though he had himself been looked upon as enlightened in this respect in the last years of Lord Liverpool, when Lord Wallace and Mr. Huskisson were astonishing the world, he had relapsed, after the schism of the Tory party, into orthodoxy, and was satisfied that the tenets of the economists were mere theories, or could only be reduced into practice by revolution.

'But it is a pleasant life, that of a farmer,' said Mr. Ferrars to Job.

'Yes, but life should be something more than pleasant,' said Job, who always looked discontented; 'an ox in a pasture has a pleasant life.'

'Well, and why should it not be a profitable one, too?' said Mr. Ferrars.

'I do not see my way to that,' said Job moodily; 'there is not much to be got out of the land at any time, and still less on the terms we hold it.'

'But you are not high-rented!'

'Oh, rent is nothing, if everything else were right, but nothing is right,' said Job. 'In the first place, a farmer is the only trader who has no security for his capital.'

'Ah! you want a lease?'

'I should be very sorry to have a lease like any that I have seen,' replied Job. 'We had one once in our family, and we keep it as a curiosity. It is ten skins long, and more tyrannical nonsense was never engrossed by man.'

'But your family, I believe, has been on this estate for generations now,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and they have done well.'

'They have done about as well as their stock. They have existed,' said Job; 'nothing more.'

'Your father always gives me quite the idea of a prosperous man,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'Whether he be or not I am sure I cannot say,' said Job; 'for as neither he nor any of his predecessors ever kept any accounts, it is rather difficult to ascertain their exact condition. So long as he has money enough in his pocket to pay his labourers and buy a little stock, my father, like every British farmer, is content. The fact is, he is a serf as much as his men, and until we get rid of feudalism he will remain so.'

'These are strong opinions,' said Mr. Ferrars, drawing himself up, and looking a little cold.

'Yes, but they will make their way,' said Job. 'So far as I myself am concerned, I do not much care what happens to the land, for I do not mean to remain on it; but I care for the country. For the sake of the country I should like to see the whole thing upset.'

'What thing?' asked Mr. Ferrars.

'Feudalism,' said Job. 'I should like to see this estate managed on the same principles as they do their great establishments in the north of England. Instead of feudalism, I would substitute the commercial principle. I would have long leases without covenants; no useless timber, and no game.'

'Why, you would destroy the country,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'We owe everything to the large towns,' said Job.

'The people in the large towns are miserable,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'They cannot be more miserable than the people in the country,' said Job.

'Their wretchedness is notorious,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'Look at their riots.'

'Well, we had Swing in the country only two or three years ago.'

Mr. Ferrars looked sad. The reminiscence was too near and too fatal. After a pause he said with an air of decision, and as if imparting a state secret, 'If it were not for the agricultural districts, the King's army could not be recruited.'

'Well, that would not break my heart,' said Job.

'Why, my good fellow, you are a Radical!'

'They may call me what they like,' said Job; 'but it will not alter matters. However, I am going among the Radicals soon, and then I shall know what they are.'

'And can you leave your truly respectable parent?' said Mr. Ferrars rather solemnly, for he remembered his promise to Farmer Thornberry to speak seriously to his son.

'Oh! my respectable parent will do very well without me, sir. Only let him be able to drive into Bamford on market day, and get two or three linendrapers to take their hats off to him, and he will be happy enough, and always ready to die for our glorious Constitution.'

CHAPTER XIV.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO, the darkest and most distressing year in the life of Mr. Ferrars, closed in comparative calm and apparent content. He was himself greatly altered, both in manner and appearance. He was kind and gentle, but

he was silent, and rarely smiled. His hair was grizzled, and he began to stoop. But he was always employed, and was interested in his labours.

His sanguine wife bore up against their misfortunes with far more animation. She was at first amused with her new life, and when she was accustomed to it, she found a never-failing resource in her conviction of a coming reaction. Mrs. Ferrars possessed most feminine qualities, and many of them in excess. She could not reason, but her intuition was remarkable. She was of opinion that 'these people never could go on,' and that they must necessarily be succeeded by William and his friends. In vain her husband, when she pressed her views and convictions on him, would shake his head over the unprecedented majority of the government, and sigh while he acknowledged that the Tories absolutely did not now command one-fifth of the House of Commons; his shakes and sighs were equally disregarded by her, and she persisted in her dreams of riding upon elephants.

After all Mrs. Ferrars was right. There is nothing more remarkable in political history than the sudden break-up of the Whig party after their successful revolution of 1832. It is one of the most striking instances on record of all the elements of political power being useless without a commanding individual will. During the second year of their exile in the Berkshire hills, affairs looked so black that it seemed no change could occur except further and more calamitous revolution. Zenobia went to Vienna that she might breathe the atmosphere of law and order, and hinted to Mrs. Ferrars that probably she should never return—at least not until Parliament met, when she trusted the House of Lords, if they were not abolished in the interval, would save the country. And yet at the commencement of the following year an old colleague of Mr. Ferrars apprised him, in the darkest and the deepest confidence, that 'there was a screw loose,' and he must 'look out for squalls.'

In the meantime Mr. Ferrars increased and established his

claims on his party, if they ever did rally, by his masterly articles in their great Review, which circumstances favoured, and which kept up that increasing feeling of terror and despair which then was deemed necessary to the advancement of Conservative opinions.

At home a year and more had elapsed without change. The occasional appearance of Nigel Penruddock was the only event. It was to all a pleasing, and to some of the family a deeply interesting, one. Nigel, though a student and devoted to the holy profession for which he was destined, was also a sportsman. His Christianity was muscular, and Endymion, to whom he had taken a fancy, became the companion of his pastimes. All the shooting of the estate was at Nigel's command, but as there were no keepers, it was of course very rough work. Still it was a novel and animating life for Endymion; and though the sport was slight, the pursuit was keen. Then Nigel was a great fisherman, and here their efforts had a surer return, for they dwelt in a land of trout streams, and in their vicinity was a not inconsiderable river. It was an adventure of delight to pursue some of these streams to their source, throwing, as they rambled on, the fly in the rippling waters. Myra, too, took some pleasure in these fishing expeditions, carrying their luncheon and a German book in her wallet, and sitting quietly on the bank for hours, when they had fixed upon some favoured pool for a prolonged campaign.

Every time that Nigel returned home, a difference, and a striking difference, was observed in him. His person, of course, became more manly, his manner more assured, his dress more modish. It was impossible to deny that he was extremely good-looking, interesting in his discourse, and distinguished in his appearance. Endymion idolised him. Nigel was his model. He imitated his manner, caught the tone of his voice, and began to give opinions on subjects, sacred and profane.

After a hard morning's march, one day, as they were lolling on the turf amid the old beeches and the juniper, Nigel said—

'What does Mr. Ferrars mean you to be, Endymion?'

'I do not know,' said Endymion, looking perplexed.

'But I suppose you are to be something?'

'Yes; I suppose I must be something; because papa has lost his fortune.'

'And what would you like to be?'

'I never thought about it,' said Endymion.

'In my opinion there is only one thing for a man to be in this age,' said Nigel peremptorily; 'he should go into the Church.'

'The Church!' said Endymion.

'There will soon be nothing else left,' said Nigel. 'The Church must last for ever. It is built upon a rock. It was founded by God; all other governments have been founded by men. When they are destroyed, and the process of destruction seems rapid, there will be nothing left to govern mankind except the Church.'

'Indeed!' said Endymion; 'papa is very much in favour of the Church, and, I know, is writing something about it.'

'Yes, but Mr. Ferrars is an Erastian,' said Nigel; 'you need not tell him I said so, but he is one. He wants the Church to be the servant of the State, and all that sort of thing, but that will not do any longer. This destruction of the Irish bishoprics has brought affairs to a crisis. No human power has the right to destroy a bishopric. It is a divinely-ordained office, and when a diocese is once established, it is eternal.'

'I see,' said Endymion, much interested.

'I wish,' continued Nigel, 'you were two or three years older, and Mr. Ferrars could send you to Oxford. That is the place to understand these things, and they will soon be the only things to understand. The rector knows nothing about them. My father is thoroughly high and dry, and has not the slightest idea of Church principles.'

'Indeed!' said Endymion.

'It is quite a new set even at Oxford,' continued Nigel; 'but their principles are as old as the Apostles, and come down from them, straight.'

'That is a long time ago,' said Endymion.

'I have a great fancy,' continued Nigel, without apparently attending to him, 'to give you a thorough Church education. It would be the making of you. You would then have a purpose in life, and never be in doubt or perplexity on any subject. We ought to move heaven and earth to induce Mr. Ferrars to send you to Oxford.'

'I will speak to Myra about it,' said Endymion.

'I said something of this to your sister the other day,' said Nigel, 'but I fear she is terribly Erastian. However, I will give you something to read. It is not very long, but you can read it at your leisure, and then we will talk over it afterwards, and perhaps I may give you something else.'

Endymion did not fail to give a report of this conversation and similar ones to his sister, for he was in the habit of telling her everything. She listened with attention, but not with interest, to his story. Her expression was kind, but hardly serious. Her wondrous eyes gave him a glance of blended mockery and affection. 'Dear darling,' she said, 'if you are to be a clergyman, I should like you to be a cardinal.'

CHAPTER XV.

The dark deep hints that had reached Mr. Ferrars at the beginning of 1834 were the harbingers of startling events. In the spring it began to be rumoured among the initiated, that the mighty Reform Cabinet with its colossal majority, and its testimonial goblets of gold, raised by the penny subscriptions of a grateful people, was in convulsions, and before the month of July had elapsed Lord Grey had resigned, under circumstances which exhibited the entire demoralisation of his party. Except Zenobia, every one was of opinion that the King acted wisely in entrusting the reconstruction of the Whig ministry to his late Secretary of State, Lord Melbourne. Nevertheless, it could no longer be concealed, nay, it was invariably admitted, that the

political situation had been largely and most unexpectedly changed, and that there was a prospect, dim, perhaps, yet not undefinable, of the conduct of public affairs again falling to the alternate management of two rival constitutional parties.

Zenobia was so full of hope, and almost of triumph, that she induced her lord in the autumn to assemble their political friends at one of his great seats, and Mr. and Mrs. Ferrars were urgently invited to join the party. But, after some hesitation, they declined this proposal. Had Mr. Ferrars been as sanguine as his wife, he would perhaps have overcome his strong disinclination to re-enter the world, but though no longer despairing of a Tory revival, he was of opinion that a considerable period, even several years, must elapse before its occurrence. Strange to say, he found no difficulty in following his own humour through any contrary disposition on the part of Mrs. Ferrars. With all her ambition and passionate love of society, she was unwilling to return to that stage, where she once had blazed, in a subdued and almost subordinate position. In fact, it was an affair of the wardrobe. The queen of costumes, whose fanciful and gorgeous attire even Zenobia was wont to praise, could not endure a reappearance in old dresses. 'I do not so much care about my jewels, William,' she said to her husband, 'but one must have new dresses.'

It was a still mild day in November, a month which in the country, and especially on the light soils, has many charms, and the whole Ferrars family were returning home after an afternoon ramble on the chase. The leaf had changed but had not fallen, and the vast spiral masses of the dark green juniper effectively contrasted with the rich brown foliage of the beech, varied occasionally by the scarlet leaves of the wild cherry tree, that always mingles with these woods. Around the house were some lime trees of large size, and at this period of the year their foliage, still perfect, was literally quite golden. They seemed like trees in some fairy tale of imprisoned princesses or wandering cavaliers, and such they would remain, until the fatal night that brings the first frost.

'There is a parcel from London,' said the servant to Mr. Ferrars, as they entered the house. 'It is on your desk.'

A parcel from London was one of the great events of their life. What could it be? Perhaps some proofs, probably some books. Mr. Ferrars entered his room alone. It was a very small brown paper parcel, evidently not books. He opened it hastily, and disencumbered its contents of several coverings. The contents took the form of a letter—a single letter.

The handwriting was recognised, and he read the letter with an agitated countenance, and then he opened the door of his room, and called loudly for his wife, who was by his side in a few moments.

'A letter, my love, from Barron,' he cried. 'The King has dismissed Lord Melbourne and sent for the Duke of Wellington, who has accepted the conduct of affairs.'

'You must go to town directly,' said his wife. 'He offered you the Cabinet in 1832. No person has such a strong claim on him as you have.'

'It does not appear that he is exactly prime minister,' said Mr. Ferrars, looking again at the letter. 'They have sent for Peel, who is at Rome, but the Duke is to conduct the government till he arrives.'

'You must go to town immediately,' repeated Mrs. Ferrars. 'There is not a moment to be lost. Send down to the Horse Shoe and secure an inside place in the Salisbury coach. It reaches this place at nine to-morrow morning. I will have everything ready. You must take a portmanteau and a carpet-bag. I wonder if you could get a bedroom at the Rodneys'. It would be so nice to be among old friends; they must feel for you. And then it will be near the Carlton, which is a great thing. I wonder how he will form his cabinet. What a pity he is not here!'

'It is a wonderful event, but the difficulties must be immense, observed Ferrars.

'Oh! you always see difficulties. I see none. The King is with us, the country is disgusted. It is what I always said would be; the reaction is complete.'

'Well, we had better now go and tell the children,' said Ferrars. 'I leave you all here for the first time,' and he seemed to sigh.

'Well, I hope we shall soon join you,' said Mrs. Ferrars. 'It is the very best time for hiring a house. What I have set my heart upon is the Green Park. It will be near your office and not too near. I am sure I could not live again in a street.'

The children were informed that public events of importance had occurred, that the King had changed his ministry, and that papa must go up to town immediately and see the Duke of Wellington. The eyes of Mrs. Ferrars danced with excitement as she communicated to them all this intelligence, and much more, with a volubility in which of late years she had rarely indulged. Mr. Ferrars looked grave and said little. Then he patted Endymion on the head, and kissed Myra, who returned his embrace with a warmth unusual with her.

The whole household soon became in a state of bustle with the preparations for the early departure of Mr. Ferrars. It seemed difficult to comprehend how filling a portmanteau and a carpet-bag could induce such excited and continuous exertions. But then there was so much to remember, and then there was always something forgotten. Mrs. Ferrars was in her bedroom surrounded by all her maids; Mr. Ferrars was in his study looking out some papers which it was necessary to take with him. The children were alone.

'I wonder if we shall be restored to our greatness,' said Myra to Endymion.

'Well, I shall be sorry to leave the old place; I have been happy here.'

'I have not,' said Myra; 'and I do not think I could have borne this life had it not been for you.'

'It will be a wonderful change,' said Endymion.

'If it come; I fear papa is not daring enough. However, if we get out of this hole, it will be something.'

Tea-time brought them all together again, but when the meal was over, none of the usual occupations of the evening were pursued; no work, no books, no reading aloud. Mr. Ferrars

was to get up very early, and that was a reason for all retiring soon. And yet neither the husband nor the wife really cared to sleep. Mrs. Ferrars sate by the fire in his dressing-room, speculating on all possible combinations, and infusing into him all her suggestions and all her schemes. She was still prudent, and still would have preferred a great government—India if possible; but had made up her mind that he must accept the cabinet. Considering what had occurred in 1832, she thought he was bound in honour to do so. Her husband listened rather than conversed, and seemed lost in thought. At last he rose, and, embracing her with much affection, said, 'You forget I am to rise with the lark. I shall write to you every day. Best and dearest of women, you have always been right, and all my good fortune has come from you.'

CHAPTER XVI.

It was a very tedious journey, and it took the whole day to accomplish a distance which a rapid express train now can achieve in an hour. The coach carried six inside passengers, and they had to dine on the road. All the passengers were strangers to Mr. Ferrars, and he was by them unknown; one of them purchased, though with difficulty, a second edition of the 'Times' as they approached London, and favoured his fellow-travellers with the news of the change of ministry. There was much excitement, and the purchaser of the paper gave it as his opinion, 'that it was an intrigue of the Court and the Tories, and would never do.' Another modestly intimated that he thought there was a decided reaction. A third announced that England would never submit to be governed by O'Connell.

As the gloom of evening descended, Mr. Ferrars felt depressed. Though his life at Hurstley had been pensive and melancholy, he felt now the charm and the want of that sweet domestic distraction which had often prevented his mind from over-brooding, and had softened life by sympathy in little things.

Nor was it without emotion that he found himself again in London, that proud city where once he had himself been so proud. The streets were lighted, and seemed swarming with an infinite population, and the coach finally stopped at a great inn in the Strand, where Mr. Ferrars thought it prudent to secure accommodation for the night. It was too late to look after the Rodneys, but in deference to the strict injunction of Mrs. Ferrars, he paid them a visit next morning on his way to his political chief.

In the days of the great modiste, when an English lady might absolutely be dressed in London, the most celebrated mantua-maker in that city was Madame Euphrosyne. She was as fascinating as she was fashionable. She was so graceful, her manners were so pretty, so natural, and so insinuating! She took so lively an interest in her clients—her very heart was in their good looks. She was a great favourite of Mrs. Ferrars, and that lady of Madame Euphrosyne. She assured Mrs. Ferrars that she was prouder of dressing Mrs. Ferrars than all the other fine ladies in London together, and Mrs. Ferrars believed her. Unfortunately, while in the way of making a large fortune, Madame Euphrosyne, who was romantic, fell in love with, and married, a very handsome and worthless husband, whose good looks had obtained for him a position in the company of Drury Lane Theatre, then a place of refined resort, which his abilities did not justify. After pillaging and plundering his wife for many years, he finally involved her in such engagements, that she had to take refuge in the Bankruptcy Court. Her business was ruined, and her spirit was broken, and she died shortly after of adversity and chagrin. Her daughter Sylvia was then eighteen, and had inherited with the grace of her mother the beauty of her less reputable parent. Her figure was slight and undulating, and she was always exquisitely dressed. A brilliant complexion set off to advantage her delicate features, which, though serene, were not devoid of a certain expression of archness. Her white hands were delicate, her light eyes inclined to merriment, and her nose quite a gem, though a little turned up.

After their ruin, her profligate father told her that her face was her fortune, and that she must provide for herself, in which she would find no difficulty. But Sylvia, though she had never enjoyed the advantage of any training, moral or religious, had no bad impulses even if she had no good ones, was of a rather cold character, and extremely prudent. She recoiled from the life of riot, and disorder, and irregularity, in which she had unwittingly passed her days, and which had terminated so tragically, and she resolved to make an effort to secure for herself a different career. She had heard that Mrs. Ferrars was in want of an attendant, and she determined to apply for the post. As one of the chief customers of her mother, Sylvia had been in the frequent habit of waiting on that lady, with whom she had become a favourite. She was so pretty, and the only person who could fit Mrs. Ferrars. Her appeal, therefore, was not in vain; it was more than successful. Mrs. Ferrars was attracted by Sylvia. Mrs. Ferrars was magnificent, generous, and she liked to be a patroness and to be surrounded by favourites. She determined that Sylvia should not sink into a menial position; she adopted her as a humble friend, and one who every day became more regarded by her. Sylvia arranged her invitations to her receptions, a task which required finish and precision; sometimes wrote her notes. She spoke and wrote French, too, and that was useful, was a musician, and had a pretty voice. Above all, she was a first-rate counsellor in costume; and so, looking also after Mrs. Ferrars' dogs and birds, she became almost one of the family; dined with them often when they were alone, and was frequently Mrs. Ferrars' companion in her carriage.

Sylvia, though not by nature impulsive, really adored her patroness. She governed her manners and she modelled her dress on that great original, and, next to Mrs. Ferrars, Sylvia in time became nearly the finest lady in London. There was, indeed, much in Mrs. Ferrars to captivate a person like Sylvia. Mrs. Ferrars was beautiful, fashionable, gorgeous, wonderfully expensive, and, where her taste was pleased, profusely generous. Her winning manner was not less irresistible because it was

sometimes uncertain, and she had the art of being intimate without being familiar.

When the crash came, Sylvia was really broken-hearted, or believed she was, and implored that she might attend the deposed sovereigns into exile; but that was impossible, however anxious they might be as to the future of their favourite. Her destiny was sooner decided than they could have anticipated. There was a member of the household, or rather family, in Hill Street, who bore almost the same relation to Mr. Ferrars as Sylvia to his wife. This was Mr. Rodney, a remarkably good-looking person, by nature really a little resembling his principal, and completing the resemblance by consummate art. The courtiers of Alexander of Macedon could not study their chief with more devotion, or more sedulously imitate his mien and carriage, than did Mr. Rodney that distinguished individual of whom he was the humble friend, and who he was convinced was destined to be Prime Minister of England. Mr. Rodney was the son of the office-keeper of old Mr. Ferrars, and it was the ambition of the father that his son, for whom he had secured a sound education, should become a member of the civil service. It had become an apothegm in the Ferrars family that something must be done for Rodney, and whenever the apparent occasion failed, which was not unfrequent, old Mr. Ferrars used always to add, 'Never mind; so long as I live, Rodney shall never want a home.' The object of all this kindness, however, was little distressed by their failures in his preferment. He had implicit faith in the career of his friend and master, and looked forward to the time when it might not be impossible that he himself might find a haven in a commissionership. Recently Mr. Ferrars had been able to confer on him a small post with duties not too engrossing, and which did not prevent his regular presence in Hill Street, where he made himself generally useful.

If there were anything confidential to be accomplished in their domestic life, everything might be trusted to his discretion and entire devotion. He supervised the establishment without

injudiciously interfering with the house-steward, copied secret papers for Mr. Ferrars, and when that gentleman was out of office acted as his private secretary. Mr. Rodney was the most official personage in the ministerial circle. He considered human nature only with reference to office. No one was so intimately acquainted with all the details of the lesser patronage as himself, and his hours of study were passed in the pages of the 'Peerage' and in penetrating the mysteries of the 'Royal Calendar.'

The events of 1832, therefore, to this gentleman were scarcely a less severe blow than to the Ferrars family itself. Indeed, like his chief, he looked upon himself as the victim of a revolution. Mr. Rodney had always been an admirer of Sylvia, but no more. He had accompanied her to the theatre, and had attended her to the park, but this was quite understood on both sides only to be gallantry; both, perhaps, in their prosperity, with respect to the serious step of life, had indulged in higher dreams. But the sympathy of sorrow is stronger than the sympathy of prosperity. In the darkness of their lives, each required comfort: he murmured some accents of tender solace, and Sylvia agreed to become Mrs. Rodney.

When they considered their position, the prospect was not free from anxiety. To marry and then separate is, where there is affection, trying. His income would secure them little more than a roof, but how to live under that roof was a mystery. For her to become a governess, and for him to become a secretary, and to meet only on an occasional Sunday, was a sorry lot. And yet both possessed accomplishments or acquirements which ought in some degree to be productive. Rodney had a friend, and he determined to consult him.

That friend was no common person; he was Mr. Vigo, by birth a Yorkshireman, and gifted with all the attributes, physical and intellectual, of that celebrated race. At present he was the most fashionable tailor in London, and one whom many persons consulted. Besides being consummate in his art, Mr. Vigo had the reputation of being a man of singularly good judg-

ment. He was one who obtained influence over all with whom he came in contact, and as his business placed him in contact with various classes, but especially with the class socially most distinguished, his influence was great. The golden youth who repaired to his counters came there not merely to obtain raiment of the best material and the most perfect cut, but to see and talk with Mr. Vigo, and to ask his opinion on various points. There was a spacious room where, if they liked, they might smoke a cigar, and 'Vigo's cigars' were something which no one could rival. If they liked to take a glass of hock with their tobacco, there was a bottle ready from the cellars of Johannisberg. Mr. Vigo's stable was almost as famous as its master; he drove the finest horses in London, and rode the best hunters in the Vale of Aylesbury. With all this, his manners were exactly what they should be. He was neither pretentious nor servile, but simple, and with becoming respect for others and for himself. He never took a liberty with any one, and such treatment, as is generally the case, was reciprocal.

Mr. Vigo was much attached to Mr. Rodney, and was proud of his intimate acquaintance with him. He wanted a friend not of his own order, for that would not increase or improve his ideas, but one conversant with the habits and feelings of a superior class, and yet he did not want a fine gentleman for an intimate, who would have been either an insolent patron or a designing parasite. Rodney had relations with the aristocracy, with the political world, and could feel the pulse of public life. His appearance was engaging, his manners gentle if not gentlemanlike, and he had a temper never disturbed. This is a quality highly appreciated by men of energy and fire, who may happen not to have a complete self-control.

When Rodney detailed to his friend the catastrophe that had occurred and all its sad consequences, Mr. Vigo heard him in silence, occasionally nodding his head in sympathy or approbation, or scrutinising a statement with his keen hazel eye. When his visitor had finished, he said—

'When there has been a crash, there is nothing like a change

of scene. I propose that you and Mrs. Rodney should come and stay with me a week at my house at Barnes, and there a good many things may occur to us.'

And so, towards the end of the week, when the Rodneys had exhausted their whole programme of projects, against every one of which there seemed some invincible objection, their host said, 'You know I rather speculate in houses. I bought one last year in Warwick Street. It is a large roomy house in a quiet situation, though in a bustling quarter, just where members of parliament would like to lodge. I have put it in thorough repair. What I propose is that you should live there, let the first and second floors—they are equally good—and live on the ground floor yourselves, which is amply convenient. We will not talk about rent till the year is over and we see how it answers. The house is unfurnished, but that is nothing. I will introduce you to a friend of mine who will furnish it for you solidly and handsomely, you paying a percentage on the amount expended. He will want a guarantee, but of course I will be that. It is an experiment, but try it. Try it for a year; at any rate you will be a householder, and you will have the opportunity of thinking of something else.'

Hitherto the Rodneys had been successful in their enterprise, and the soundness of Mr. Vigo's advice had been proved. Their house was full, and of the best tenants. Their first floor was taken by a distinguished M.P., a county member of repute whom Mr. Rodney had known before the 'revolution,' and who was so pleased with his quarters, and the comfort and refinement of all about him, that to ensure their constant enjoyment he became a yearly tenant. Their second floor, which was nearly as good as their first, was inhabited by a young gentleman of fashion, who took them originally only by the week, and who was always going to give them up, but never did. The weekly lodger went to Paris, and he went to German baths, and he went to country houses, and he was frequently a long time away, but he never gave up his lodgings. When therefore Mr. Ferrars called in Warwick Street, the truth is the house

was full and there was no vacant room for him. But this the Rodneys would not admit. Though they were worldly people, and it seemed impossible that anything more could be gained from the ruined house of Hurstley, they had, like many other people, a superstition, and their superstition was an adoration of the family of Ferrars. The sight of their former master, who, had it not been for the revolution, might have been Prime Minister of England, and the recollection of their former mistress and all her splendour, and all the rich dresses which she used to give so profusely to her dependent, quite overwhelmed them. Without consultation this sympathising couple leapt to the same conclusion. They assured Mr. Ferrars they could accommodate him, and that he should find everything prepared for him when he called again, and they resigned to him, without acknowledging it, their own commodious and well-furnished chamber, which Mrs. Rodney prepared for him with the utmost solicitude, arranging his writing-table and materials as he used to have them in Hill Street, and showing by a variety of modes she remembered all his ways.

CHAPTER XVII.

After securing his room in Warwick Street, Mr. Ferrars called on his political chiefs. Though engrossed with affairs, the moment his card was exhibited he was seen, cordially welcomed, and addressed in confidence. Not only were his claims acknowledged without being preferred, but an evidently earnest hope was expressed that they might be fully satisfied. No one had suffered more for the party and no one had worked harder or more effectively for it. But at present nothing could be done and nothing more could be said. All depended on Peel. Until he arrived nothing could be arranged. Their duties were limited to provisionally administering the affairs of the country until his appearance.

It was many days, even weeks, before that event could

happen. The messenger would travel to Rome night and day, but it was calculated that nearly three weeks must elapse before his return. Mr. Ferrars then went to the Carlton Club, which he had assisted in forming three or four years before, and had established in a house of modern dimensions in Charles Street, St. James. It was called then the Charles Street gang, and none but the thoroughgoing cared to belong to it. Now he found it flourishing in a magnificent mansion on Carlton Terrace, while in very sight of its windows, on a plot of ground in Pall Mall, a palace was rising to receive it. It counted already fifteen hundred members, who had been selected by an omniscient and scrutinising committee, solely with reference to their local influence throughout the country, and the books were overflowing with impatient candidates of rank, and wealth, and power.

Three years ago Ferrars had been one of the leading spirits of this great confederacy, and now he entered the superb chamber, and it seemed to him that he did not recognise a human being. Yet it was full to overflowing, and excitement and anxiety and bustle were impressed on every countenance. If he had heard some of the whispers and remarks, as he entered and moved about, his self-complacency would scarcely have been gratified.

'Who is that?' inquired a young M.P. of a brother senator not much more experienced.

'Have not the remotest idea; never saw him before. Barron is speaking to him; he will tell us. I say, Barron, who is your friend?'

'That is Ferrars!'

'Ferrars! who is he?'

'One of our best men. If all our fellows had fought like him against the Reform Bill, that infernal measure would never have been carried.'

'Oh! ah! I remember something now,' said the young M.P., 'but anything that happened before the election of '32 I look upon as an old almanack.'

However, notwithstanding the first and painful impression of strangers and strangeness, when a little time had elapsed Ferrars found many friends, and among the most distinguished present. Nothing could be more hearty than their greeting, and he had not been in the room half an hour before he had accepted an invitation to dine that very day with Lord Pomeroy.

It was a large and rather miscellaneous party, but all of the right kidney. Some men who had been cabinet ministers, and some who expected to be; several occupiers in old days of the secondary offices; both the whips, one noisy and the other mysterious; several lawyers of repute who must be brought into parliament, and some young men who had distinguished themselves in the reformed house and whom Ferrars had never seen before. 'It is like old days,' said the husband of Zenobia to Ferrars, who sate next to him; 'I hope it will float, but we shall know nothing till Peel comes.'

'He will have difficulty with his cabinet so far as the House of Commons is concerned,' said an old privy councillor. 'They must have seats, and his choice is very limited.'

'He will dissolve,' said the husband of Zenobia. 'He must.'

'Wheugh!' said the privy councillor, and he shrugged his shoulders.

'The old story will not do,' said the husband of Zenobia. 'We must have new blood. Peel must reconstruct on a broad basis.'

'Well, they say there is no lack of converts,' said the old privy councillor.

All this, and much more that he heard, made Ferrars ponder, and anxiously. No cabinet without parliament. It was but reasonable. A dissolution was therefore in his interest. And yet, what a prospect! A considerable expenditure, and yet with a considerable expenditure a doubtful result. Then reconstruction on a broad basis—what did that mean? Neither more nor less than rival candidates for office. There was no lack of converts. He dare say not. A great deal had developed since his exile at Hurstley—things which are not learned by newspapers, or even private correspondence. He spoke to Barron

after dinner. He had reason to believe Barron was his friend. Barron could give no opinion about dissolution; all depended on Peel. But they were acting, and had been acting for some time, as if a dissolution were on the cards. Ferrars had better call upon him to-morrow, and go over the list, and see what could be done for him. He had every claim.

The man with every claim called on Barron on the morrow, and saw his secret list, and listened to all his secret prospects and secret plans. There was more than one manufacturing town where there was an opening; decided reaction, and a genuine Conservative feeling. Barron had no doubt that, although a man might not get in the first time he stood, he would ultimately. Ultimately was not a word which suited Mr. Ferrars. There were several old boroughs where the freemen still outnumbered the ten-pounders, and where the prospects were more encouraging; but the expense was equal to the goodness of the chance, and although Ferrars had every claim, and would no doubt be assisted, still one could not shut one's eyes to the fact that the personal expenditure must be considerable. The agricultural boroughs must be fought, at least this time, by local men. Something might be done with an Irish borough; expense, comparatively speaking inconsiderable, but the politics deeply Orange.

Gloom settled on the countenance of this spoiled child of politics, who had always sate for a close borough, and who recoiled from a contest like a woman, when he pictured to himself the struggle and exertion and personal suffering he would have to encounter and endure, and then with no certainty of success. The trained statesman, who had anticipated the mass of his party on Catholic emancipation, to become an Orange candidate! It was worse than making speeches to ten-pounders and canvassing freemen!

'I knew things were difficult,' said Ferrars; 'but I was in hopes that there were yet some seats that we might command.'

'No doubt there are,' said Mr. Barron; 'but they are few, and they are occupied—at least at present. But, after all, a

thousand things may turn up, and you may consider nothing definitively arranged till Sir Robert arrives. The great thing is to be on the spot.'

Ferrars wrote to his wife daily, and kept her minutely acquainted with the course of affairs. She agreed with Barron that the great thing was to be on the spot. She felt sure that something would turn up. She was convinced that Sir Robert would send for him, offer him the cabinet, and at the same time provide him with a seat. Her own inclination was still in favour of a great colonial or foreign appointment. She still hankered after India; but if the cabinet were offered, as was certain, she did not consider that William, as a man of honour, could refuse to accept the trust and share the peril.

So Ferrars remained in London under the roof of the Rodneys. The feverish days passed in the excitement of political life in all its manifold forms, grave council and light gossip, dinners with only one subject of conversation, and that never palling, and at last, even evenings spent again under the roof of Zenobia, who, the instant her winter apartments were ready to receive the world, had hurried up to London and raised her standard in St. James' Square. 'It was like old days,' as her husband had said to Ferrars when they met after a long separation.

Was it like old days? he thought to himself when he was alone. Old days, when the present had no care, and the future was all hope; when he was proud, and justly proud, of the public position he had achieved, and of all the splendid and felicitous circumstances of life that had clustered round him. He thought of those away, and with whom during the last three years he had so continuously and intimately lived. And his hired home that once had been associated only in his mind with exile, imprisonment, misfortune, almost disgrace, became hallowed by affection, and in the agony of the suspense which now involved him, and to encounter which he began to think his diminished nerve unequal, he would have bargained for the rest of his life to pass undisturbed in that sweet solitude, in the delights of study and the tranquillity of domestic love.

A little not unamiable weakness this, but it passed off in the morning like a dream, when Mr. Ferrars heard that Sir Robert had arrived.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was a dark December night when Mr. Ferrars returned to Hurstley. His wife, accompanied by the gardener with a lantern, met him on the green. She embraced him, and whispered, 'Is it very bad, love? I fear you have softened it to me?'

'By no means bad, and I told you the truth: not all, for had I, my letter would have been too late. He said nothing about the cabinet, but offered me a high post in his government, provided I could secure my seat. That was impossible. During the month I was in town I had realised that. I thought it best, therefore, at once to try the other tack, and nothing could be more satisfactory.'

'Did you say anything about India?' she said in a very low voice.

'I did not. He is an honourable man, but he is cold, and my manner is not distinguished for *abandon*. I thought it best to speak generally, and leave it to him. He acknowledged my claim, and my fitness for such posts, and said if his government lasted it would gratify him to meet my wishes. Barron says the government will last. They will have a majority, and if Stanley and Graham had joined them, they would have had not an inconsiderable one. But in that case I should probably not have had the cabinet, if indeed he meant to offer it to me now.'

'Of course he did,' said his wife. 'Who has such claims as you have? Well, now we must hope and watch. Look cheerful to the children, for they have been very anxious.'

With this hint the meeting was not unhappy, and the evening passed with amusement and interest. Endymion embraced his father with warmth, and Myra kissed him on both cheeks. Mr. Ferrars had a great deal of gossip which

interested his wife, and to a certain degree his children. The latter of course remembered Zenobia, and her sayings and doings were always amusing. There were anecdotes, too, of illustrious persons which always interest, especially when in the personal experience of those with whom we are intimately connected. What the Duke, or Sir Robert, or Lord Lyndhurst said to papa seemed doubly wiser or brighter than if it had been said to a third person. Their relations with the world of power, and fashion, and fame, seemed not to be extinct, at least reviving from their torpid condition. Mr. Ferrars had also brought a German book for Myra; and 'as for you, Endymion,' he said, 'I have been much more successful for you than for your father, though I hope I shall not have myself in the long run to complain. Our friends are faithful to us, and I have got you put down on the private list for a clerkship both in the Foreign Office and the Treasury. They are the two best things, and you will have one of the first vacancies that will occur in either department. I know your mother wishes you to be in the Foreign Office. Let it be so if it come. I confess, myself, remembering your grandfather's career, I have always a weakness for the Treasury, but so long as I see you well planted in Whitehall, I shall be content. Let me see, you will be sixteen in March. I could have wished you to wait another year, but we must be ready when the opening occurs.'

The general election in 1834–5, though it restored the balance of parties, did not secure to Sir Robert Peel a majority, and the anxiety of the family at Hurstley was proportionate to the occasion. Barron was always sanguine, but the vote on the Speakership could not but alarm them. Barron said it did not signify, and that Sir Robert had resolved to go on and had confidence in his measures. His measures were excellent, and Sir Robert never displayed more resource, more energy, and more skill, than he did in the spring of 1835. But knowledge of human nature was not Sir Robert Peel's strong point, and it argued some deficiency in that respect, to suppose that the fitness of his measures could disarm a vindictive opposition. On the

contrary, they rather whetted their desire of revenge, and they were doubly loth that he should increase his reputation by availing himself of an opportunity which they deemed the Tory party had unfairly acquired.

After the vote on the Speakership, Mr. Ferrars was offered a second-class West Indian government. His wife would not listen to it. If it were Jamaica, the offer might be considered, though it could scarcely be accepted without great sacrifice. The children, for instance, must be left at home. Strange to say, Mr. Ferrars was not disinclined to accept the inferior post. Endymion he looked upon as virtually provided for, and Myra, he thought, might accompany them; if only for a year. But he ultimately yielded, though not without a struggle, to the strong feeling of his wife.

'I do not see why I also should not be left behind,' said Myra to her brother in one of their confidential walks. 'I should like to live in London in lodgings with you.'

The approaching appointment of her brother filled her from the first with the greatest interest. She was always talking of it when they were alone—fancying his future life, and planning how it might be happier and more easy. 'My only joy in life is seeing you,' she sometimes said, 'and yet this separation does not make me unhappy. It seems a chance from heaven for you. I pray every night it may be the Foreign Office.'

The ministry were still sanguine as to their prospects in the month of March, and they deemed that public opinion was rallying round Sir Robert. Perhaps Lord John Russell, who was the leader of the opposition, felt this, in some degree, himself, and he determined to bring affairs to a crisis by notice of a motion respecting the appropriation of the revenues of the Irish Church. Then Barron wrote to Mr. Ferrars that affairs did not look so well, and advised him to come up to town, and take anything that offered. 'It is something,' he remarked, 'to have something to give up. We shall not, I suppose, always be out of office, and they get preferred more easily whose promotion contributes to patronage, even while they claim its exercise.'

The ministry were in a minority on the Irish Church on April 2, the day on which Mr. Ferrars arrived in town. They did not resign, but the attack was to be repeated in another form on the 6th. During the terrible interval Mr. Ferrars made distracted visits to Downing Street, saw secretaries of state, who sympathised with him notwithstanding their own chagrin, and was closeted daily and hourly with under-secretaries, parliamentary and permanent, who really alike wished to serve him. But there was nothing to be had. He was almost meditating taking Sierra Leone, or the Gold Coast, when the resignation of Sir Robert Peel was announced. At the last moment, there being, of course, no vacancy in the Foreign Office, or the Treasury, he obtained from Barron an appointment for Endymion, and so, after having left Hurstley five months before to become Governor-General of India, this man, 'who had claims,' returned to his mortified home with a clerkship for his son in a second-rate government office.

CHAPTER XIX.

Disappointment and distress, it might be said despair, seemed fast settling again over the devoted roof of Hurstley, after a three years' truce of tranquillity. Even the crushing termination of her worldly hopes was forgotten for the moment by Mrs. Ferrars in her anguish at the prospect of separation from Endymion. Such a catastrophe she had never for a moment contemplated. True it was she had been delighted with the scheme of his entering the Foreign Office, but that was on the assumption that she was to enter office herself, and that, whatever might be the scene of the daily labours of her darling child, her roof should be his home, and her indulgent care always at his command. But that she was absolutely to part with Endymion, and that, at his tender age, he was to be launched alone into the wide world, was an idea that she could not entertain, or even comprehend. Who was to clothe him, and feed him, and

tend him, and save him from being run over, and guide and guard him in all the difficulties and dangers of this mundane existence? It was madness, it was impossible. But Mr. Ferrars, though gentle, was firm. No doubt it was to be wished that the event could have been postponed for a year; but its occurrence, unless all prospect of establishment in life were surrendered, was inevitable, and a slight delay would hardly render the conditions under which it happened less trying. Though Endymion was only sixteen, he was tall and manly beyond his age, and during the latter years of his life, his naturally sweet temper and genial disposition had been schooled in self-discipline and self-sacrifice. He was not to be wholly left to strangers; Mr. Ferrars had spoken to Rodney about receiving him, at least for the present, and steps would be taken that those who presided over his office would be influenced in his favour. The appointment was certainly not equal to what had been originally anticipated; but still the department, though not distinguished, was highly respectable, and there was no reason on earth, if the opportunity offered, that Endymion should not be removed from his present post to one in the higher departments of the state. But if this opening were rejected, what was to be the future of their son? They could not afford to send him to the University, nor did Mr. Ferrars wish him to take refuge in the bosom of the Church. As for the army, they had now no interest to acquire commissions, and if they could succeed so far, they could not make him an allowance, which would permit him to maintain himself as became his rank. The civil service remained, in which his grandfather had been eminent, and in which his own parent, at any rate, though the victim of a revolution, had not disgraced himself. It seemed, under the circumstances, the natural avenue for their child. At least, he thought it ought to be tried. He wished nothing to be settled without the full concurrence of Endymion himself. The matter should be put fairly and clearly before him, 'and for this purpose,' concluded Mr. Ferrars, 'I have just sent for him to my room;' and he retired.

The interview between the father and son was long. When Endymion left the room his countenance was pale, but its expression was firm and determined. He went forth into the garden, and there he saw Myra. 'How long you have been!' she said; 'I have been watching for you. What is settled?'

He took her arm, and in silence led her away into one of the glades. Then he said: 'I have settled to go, and I am resolved, so long as I live, that I will never cost dear papa another shilling. Things here are very bad, quite as bad as you have sometimes fancied. But do not say anything to poor mamma about them.'

Mr. Ferrars resolved that Endymion should go to London immediately, and the preparations for his departure were urgent. Myra did everything. If she had been the head of a family she could not have been more thoughtful or apparently more experienced. If she had a doubt, she stepped over to Mrs. Penruddock and consulted her. As for Mrs. Ferrars, she had become very unwell, and unable to attend to anything. Her occasional interference, fitful and feverish, and without adequate regard to circumstances, only embarrassed them. But, generally speaking, she kept to her own room, and was always weeping.

The last day came. No one pretended not to be serious and grave. Mrs. Ferrars did not appear, but saw Endymion alone. She did not speak, but locked him in her arms for many minutes, and then kissing him on the forehead, and, by a gentle motion, intimating that he should retire, she fell back on her sofa with closed eyes. He was alone for a short time with his father after dinner. Mr. Ferrars said to him: 'I have treated you in this matter as a man, and I have entire confidence in you. Your business in life is to build up again a family which was once honoured.'

Myra was still copying inventories when he returned to the drawing-room. 'These are for myself,' she said, 'so I shall always know what you ought to have. Though you go so early, I shall make your breakfast to-morrow,' and, leaning back on the sofa, she took his hand. 'Things are dark, and I fancy they will be

darker; but brightness will come, somehow or other, to you, darling, for you are born for brightness. You will find friends in life, and they will be women.'

It was nearly three years since Endymion had travelled down to Hurstley by the same coach that was now carrying him to London. Though apparently so uneventful, the period had not been unimportant in the formation, doubtless yet partial, of his character. And all its influences had been beneficial to him. The crust of pride and selfishness with which large prosperity and illimitable indulgence had encased a kind, and far from presumptuous, disposition had been removed; the domestic sentiments in their sweetness and purity had been developed; he had acquired some skill in scholarship and no inconsiderable fund of sound information; and the routine of religious thought had been superseded in his instance by an amount of knowledge and feeling on matters theological, unusual at his time of life. Though apparently not gifted with any dangerous vivacity, or fatal facility of acquisition, his mind seemed clear and painstaking, and distinguished by common sense. He was brave and accurate.

Mr. Rodney was in waiting for him at the inn. He seemed a most distinguished gentleman. A hackney coach carried them to Warwick Street, where he was welcomed by Mrs. Rodney, who was exquisitely dressed. There was also her sister, a girl not older than Endymion, the very image of Mrs. Rodney, except that she was a brunette—a brilliant brunette. This sister bore the romantic name of Imogene, for which she was indebted to her father performing the part of the husband of the heroine in Maturin's tragedy of the 'Castle of St. Aldobrand,' and which, under the inspiration of Kean, had set the town in a blaze about the time of her birth. Tea was awaiting him, and there was a mixture in their several manners of not ungraceful hospitality and the remembrance of past dependence, which was genuine and not uninteresting, though Endymion was yet too inexperienced to observe all this.

Mrs. Rodney talked very much of Endymion's mother; her

wondrous beauty, her more wondrous dresses; the splendour of her fêtes and equipages. As she dilated on the past, she seemed to share its lustre and its triumphs. 'The first of the land were always in attendance on her,' and for Mrs. Rodney's part, she never saw a real horsewoman since her dear lady. Her sister did not speak, but listened with rapt attention to the gorgeous details, occasionally stealing a glance at Endymion—a glance of deep interest, of admiration mingled as it were both with reverence and pity.

Mr. Rodney took up the conversation if his wife paused. He spoke of all the leading statesmen who had been the habitual companions of Mr. Ferrars, and threw out several anecdotes respecting them from personal experience. 'I knew them all,' continued Mr. Rodney, 'I might say intimately;' and then he told his great anecdote, how he had been so fortunate as perhaps even to save the Duke's life during the Reform Bill riots. 'His Grace has never forgotten it, and only the day before yesterday I met him in St. James' Street walking with Mr. Arbuthnot, and he touched his hat to me.'

All this gossip and good nature, and the kind and lively scene, saved Endymion from the inevitable pang, or at least greatly softened it, which accompanies our first separation from home. In due season, Mrs. Rodney observed that she doubted not Mr. Endymion, for so they ever called him, must be wearied with his journey, and would like to retire to his room; and her husband, immediately lighting a candle, prepared to introduce their new lodger to his quarters.

It was a tall house, which had recently been renovated, with a story added to it, and on this story was Endymion's chamber; not absolutely a garret, but a modern substitute for that sort of apartment. 'It is rather high,' said Mr. Rodney, half apologising for the ascent, 'but Mr. Ferrars himself chose the room. We took the liberty of lighting a fire to-night.'

And the cheerful blaze was welcome. It lit up a room clean and not uncomfortable. Feminine solicitude had fashioned a toilette-table for him, and there was a bunch of geraniums in a

blue vase on its sparkling dimity garniture. 'I suppose you have in your bag all that you want at present?' said Mr. Rodney. 'To-morrow we will unpack your trunks and arrange your things in their drawers; and after breakfast, if you please, I will show you your way to Somerset House.'

Somerset House! thought Endymion, as he stood before the fire alone. Is it so near as that? To-morrow, and I am to be at Somerset House! And then he thought of what they were doing at Hurstley—of that terrible parting with his mother, which made him choke—and of his father's last words. And then he thought of Myra, and the tears stole down his cheek. And then he knelt down by his bedside and prayed.

CHAPTER XX.

Mr. Rodney would have accompanied Endymion to Somerset House under any circumstances, but it so happened that he had reasons of his own for a visit to that celebrated building. He had occasion to see a gentleman who was stationed there. 'Not,' as he added to Endymion, 'that I know many here, but at the Treasury and in Downing Street I have several acquaintances.'

They separated at the door in the great quadrangle which led to the department to which Endymion was attached, and he contrived in due time to deliver to a messenger a letter addressed to his future chief. He was kept some time in a gloomy and almost unfurnished waiting-room, and his thoughts in a desponding mood were gathering round the dear ones who were distant, when he was summoned, and, following the messenger down a passage, was ushered into a lively apartment on which the sun was shining, and which, with its well-lined book-shelves, and tables covered with papers, and bright noisy clock, and general air of habitation and business, contrasted favourably with the room he had just quitted. A good-natured-looking man held out his hand and welcomed him cordially, and said at once, 'I served, Mr. Ferrars, under your grandfather at the Treasury, and

I am glad to see you here.' Then he spoke of the duties which Endymion would have at present to discharge. His labours at first would be somewhat mechanical; they would require only correctness and diligence; but the office was a large one, and promotion not only sure, but sometimes rapid, and as he was so young, he might with attention count on attaining, while yet in the prime of life, a future of very responsible duties and of no inconsiderable emolument. And while he was speaking he rang the bell and commanded the attendance of a clerk, under whose care Endymion was specially placed. This was a young man of pleasant address, who invited Endymion with kindness to accompany him, and leading him through several chambers, some capacious, and all full of clerks seated on high stools and writing at desks, finally ushered him into a smaller chamber where there were not above six or eight at work, and where there was a vacant seat. 'This is your place,' he said, 'and now I will introduce you to your future comrades. This is Mr. Jawett, the greatest Radical of the age, and who, when he is President of the Republic, will, I hope, do a job for his friends here. This is Mr. St. Barbe, who, when the public taste has improved, will be the most popular author of the day. In the meantime he will give you a copy of his novel, which has not sold as it ought to have done, and in which we say he has quizzed all his friends. This is Mr. Seymour Hicks, who, as you must perceive, is a man of fashion.' And so he went on, with what was evidently accustomed raillery. All laughed, and all said something courteous to Endymion, and then after a few minutes they resumed their tasks, Endymion's work being to copy long lists of figures, and routine documents of public accounts.

In the meantime, Mr. St. Barbe was busy in drawing up a public document of a different but important character, and which was conceived something in this fashion :—

'We, the undersigned, highly approving of the personal appearance and manners of our new colleague, are unanimously of opinion that he should be invited to join our symposium to-day at the immortal Joe's.'

This was quietly passed round and signed by all present, and then given to Mr. Trenchard, who, all unconsciously to the copying Endymion, wrote upon it, like a minister of state, 'Approved,' with his initial.

Joe's, more technically known as 'The Blue Posts,' was a celebrated chop-house in Naseby Street, a large, low-ceilinged, wainscoted room, with the floor strewn with sawdust, and a hissing kitchen in the centre, and fitted up with what were called boxes, these being of various sizes, and suitable to the number of the guests requiring them. About this time the fashionable coffee-houses, George's and the Piazza, and even the coffee-rooms of Stevens' or Long's, had begun to feel the injurious competition of the new clubs that of late years had been established; but these, after all, were limited, and, comparatively speaking, exclusive societies. Their influence had not touched the chop-houses, and it required another quarter of a century before their cheerful and hospitable roofs and the old taverns of London, so full, it ever seemed, of merriment and wisdom, yielded to the gradually increasing but irresistible influence of those innumerable associations, which, under classic names, or affecting to be the junior branches of celebrated confederacies, have since secured to the million, at cost price, all the delicacies of the season, and substituted for the zealous energy of immortal JOES the inexorable but frigid discipline of managing committees.

'You are our guest to-day,' said Mr. Trenchard to Endymion. 'Do not be embarrassed. It is a custom with us, but not a ruinous one. We dine off the joint, but the meat is first-rate, and you may have as much as you like, and our tipple is half-and-half. Perhaps you do not know it. Let me drink to your health.'

They ate most heartily; but when their well-earned meal was despatched, their conversation, assisted by a moderate portion of some celebrated toddy, became animated, various, and interesting. Endymion was highly amused; but being a stranger, and the youngest present, his silence was not unbecoming, and

his manner indicated that it was not occasioned by want of sympathy. The talk was very political. They were all what are called Liberals, having all of them received their appointments since the catastrophe of 1830; but the shades in the colour of their opinions were various and strong. Jawett was uncompromising; ruthlessly logical, his principles being clear, he was for what he called 'carrying them out' to their just conclusions. Trenchard, on the contrary, thought everything ought to be compromise, and that a public man ceased to be practical the moment he was logical. St. Barbe believed that literature and the arts, and intellect generally, had as little to hope for from one party as from the other; while Seymour Hicks was of opinion that the Tories never would rally, owing to their deficiency in social influences. Seymour Hicks sometimes got an invitation to a ministerial soirée.

The vote of the House of Commons in favour of an appropriation of the surplus revenues of the Irish Church to the purposes of secular education—a vote which had just changed the government and expelled the Tories—was much discussed. Jawett denounced it as a miserable subterfuge, but with a mildness of manner and a mincing expression, which amusingly contrasted with the violence of his principles and the strength of his language.

'The whole of the revenues of the Protestant Church should be at once appropriated to secular education, or to some other purpose of general utility,' he said. 'And it must come to this.'

Trenchard thought the ministry had gone as far in this matter as they well could, and Seymour Hicks remarked that any government which systematically attacked the Church would have 'society' against it. Endymion, who felt very nervous, but who on Church questions had strong convictions, ventured to ask why the Church should be deprived of its property.

'In the case of Ireland,' replied Jawett, quite in a tone of conciliatory condescension, 'because it does not fulfil the purpose for which it was endowed. It has got the property of the

nation, and it is not the Church of the people. But I go further than that. I would disendow every Church. They are not productive institutions. There is no reason why they should exist. There is no use in them.'

'No use in the Church!' said Endymion, reddening; but Mr. Trenchard, who had tact, here interfered, and said, 'I told you our friend Jawett was a great Radical; but he is in a minority among us on these matters. Everybody, however, says what he likes at Joe's.'

Then they talked of theatres, and critically discussed the articles in the daily papers and the last new book, and there was much discussion respecting a contemplated subscription boat; but still, in general, it was remarkable how they relapsed into their favourite subject—speculation upon men in office, both permanent and parliamentary, upon their characters and capacity, their habits and tempers. One was a good administrator, another did nothing; one had no detail, another too much; one was a screw, another a spendthrift; this man could make a set speech, but could not reply; his rival, capital at a reply but clumsy in a formal oration.

At this time London was a very dull city, instead of being, as it is now, a very amusing one. Probably there never was a city in the world, with so vast a population, which was so melancholy. The aristocracy probably have always found amusements adapted to the manners of the time and the age in which they lived. The middle classes, half a century ago, had little distraction from their monotonous toil and melancholy anxieties, except, perhaps, what they found in religious and philanthropic societies. Their general life must have been very dull. Some traditionary merriment always lingered among the working classes of England. Both in town and country they had always their games and fairs and junketing parties, which have developed into excursion trains and colossal pic-nics. But of all classes of the community, in the days of our fathers, there was none so unfortunate in respect of public amusements as the bachelors about town. There were, one might almost say, only

two theatres, and they so huge, that it was difficult to see or hear in either. Their monopolies, no longer redeemed by the stately genius of the Kembles, the pathos of Miss O'Neill, or the fiery passion of Kean, were already menaced, and were soon about to fall; but the crowd of diminutive but sparkling substitutes, which have since taken their place, had not yet appeared, and half-price at Drury Lane or Covent Garden was a dreary distraction after a morning of desk work. There were no Alhambras then, and no Cremornes, no palaces of crystal in terraced gardens, no casinos, no music-halls, no aquaria, no promenade concerts. Evans' existed, but not in the fulness of its modern development; and the most popular place of resort was the barbarous conviviality of the Cider Cellar.

Mr. Trenchard had paid the bill, collected his quotas and rewarded the waiter, and then, as they all rose, said to Endymion, 'We are going to the divan. Do you smoke?'

Endymion shook his head; but Trenchard added, 'Well, you will some day; but you had better come with us. You need not smoke; you can order a cup of coffee, and then you may read all the newspapers and magazines. It is a nice lounge.'

So, emerging from Naseby Street into the Strand, they soon entered a tobacconist's shop, and passing through it were admitted into a capacious saloon, well lit and fitted up with low, broad sofas, fixed against the walls, and on which were seated, or reclining, many persons, chiefly smoking cigars, but some few practising with the hookah and other oriental modes. In the centre of the room was a table covered with newspapers and publications of that class. The companions from Joe's became separated after their entrance, and St. Barbe, addressing Endymion, said, 'I am not inclined to smoke to-day. We will order some coffee, and you will find some amusement in this;' and he placed in his hands a number of 'SCARAMOUCH.'

'I hope you will like your new life,' said St. Barbe, throwing down a review on the divan, and leaning back sipping his coffee. 'One thing may be said in favour of it: you will work with a body of as true-hearted comrades as ever existed. They are

always ready to assist one. Thorough good-natured fellows, that I will say for them. I suppose it is adversity,' he continued, 'that develops the kindly qualities of our nature. I believe the sense of common degradation has a tendency to make the degraded amiable—at least among themselves. I am told it is found so in the plantations in slave-gangs.'

'But I hope we are not a slave-gang,' said Endymion.

'It is horrible to think of gentlemen, and men of education, and perhaps first-rate talents—who knows?—reduced to our straits,' said St. Barbe. 'I do not follow Jawett in all his views, for I hate political economy, and never could understand it; and he gives it you pure and simple, eh? eh?—but, I say, it is something awful to think of the incomes that some men are making, who could no more write an article in "SCARAMOUCH," than fly.'

'But our incomes may improve,' said Endymion. 'I was told to-day that promotion was even rapid in our office.'

'Our incomes may improve when we are bent and grey,' said St. Barbe, 'and we may even retire on a pension about as good as a nobleman leaves to his valet. Oh, it is a horrid world! Your father is a privy councillor, is not he?'

'Yes, and so was my grandfather, but I do not think I shall ever be one.'

'It is a great thing to have a father a privy councillor,' said St. Barbe, with a glance of envy. 'If I were the son of a privy councillor, those demons, Shuffle and Screw, would give me £500 for my novel, which now they put in their beastly magazine and print in small type, and do not pay me so much as a powdered flunkey has in St. James' Square. I agree with Jawett: the whole thing is rotten.'

'Mr. Jawett seems to have very strange opinions,' said Endymion. 'I did not like to hear what he said at dinner about the Church, but Mr. Trenchard turned the conversation, and I thought it best to let it pass.'

'Trenchard is a sensible man, and a good fellow,' said St. Barbe; 'you like him?'

'I find him kind.'

'Do you know,' said St. Barbe, in a whisper, and with a distressed and almost vindictive expression of countenance, 'that man may come any day into four thousand a year. There is only one life between him and the present owner. I believe it is a good life,' he added, in a more cheerful voice, 'but still it might happen. Is it not horrible? Four thousand a year! Trenchard with four thousand a year, and we receiving little more than the pay of a butler!'

'Well, I wish, for his sake, he might have it,' said Endymion, 'though I might lose a kind friend.'

'Look at Seymour Hicks,' said St. Barbe; 'he has smoked his cigar, and he is going. He never remains. He is going to a party, I'll be bound. That fellow gets about in a most extraordinary manner. Is it not disgusting? I doubt whether he is asked much to dinner though, or I think we should have heard of it. Nevertheless, Trenchard said the other day that Hicks had dined with Lord Cinque-Ports. I can hardly believe it; it would be too disgusting. No lord ever asked me to dinner. But the aristocracy of this country are doomed!'

'Mr. Hicks,' said Endymion, 'probably lays himself out for society.'

'I suppose you will,' said St. Barbe, with a scrutinising air. 'I should if I were the son of a privy councillor. Hicks is nothing; his father kept a stable-yard and his mother was an actress. We have had several dignitaries of the Church in my family and one admiral. And yet Hicks dines with Lord Cinque-Ports! It is positively revolting! But the things he does to get asked!—sings, rants, conjures, ventriloquises, mimics, stands on his head. His great performance is a parliamentary debate. We will make him do it for you. And yet with all this a dull dog—a very dull dog, sir. He wrote for "Scaramouch" some little time, but they can stand it no more. Between you and me, he has had notice to quit. That I know; and he will probably get the letter when he goes home from his party to-night. So much for success in society! I shall now say good-night to you.'

CHAPTER XXI.

It was only ten o'clock when Endymion returned to Warwick Street, and for the first time in his life used a pass-key, with which Mr. Rodney had furnished him in the morning, and re-entered his new home. He thought he had used it very quietly, and was lighting his candle and about to steal up to his lofty heights, when from the door of the parlour, which opened into the passage, emerged Miss Imogene, who took the candlestick from his hand and insisted on waiting upon him.

'I thought I heard something,' she said; 'you must let me light you up, for you can hardly yet know your way. I must see too if all is right; you may want something.'

So she tripped up lightly before him, showing, doubtless without premeditation, as well-turned an ankle and as pretty a foot as could fall to a damsel's fortunate lot. 'My sister and Mr. Rodney have gone to the play,' she said, 'but they left strict injunctions with me to see that you were comfortable, and that you wanted for nothing that we could supply.'

'You are too kind,' said Endymion, as she lighted the candles on his dressing-table, 'and, to tell you the truth, these are luxuries I am not accustomed to, and to which I am not entitled.'

'And yet,' she said, with a glance of blended admiration and pity, 'they tell me time was when gold was not good enough for you, and I do not think it could be.'

'Such kindness as this,' said Endymion, 'is more precious than gold.'

'I hope you will find your things well arranged. All your clothes are in these two drawers; the coats in the bottom one, and your linen in those above. You will not perhaps be able to find your pocket-handkerchiefs at first. They are in this sachet; my sister made it herself. Mr. Rodney says you are to be called at eight o'clock and breakfast at nine. I think everything is right. Good-night, Mr. Endymion.'

The Rodney household was rather a strange one. The first two floors, as we have mentioned, were let, and at expensive rates, for the apartments were capacious and capitally furnished, and the situation, if not distinguished, was extremely convenient —quiet from not being a thoroughfare, and in the heart of civilisation. They only kept a couple of servants, but their principal lodgers had their personal attendants. And yet after sunset the sisters appeared and presided at their tea-table, always exquisitely dressed; seldom alone, for Mr. Rodney had many friends, and lived in a capacious apartment, rather finely furnished, with a round table covered with gaudy print-books, a mantelpiece crowded with vases of mock Dresden, and a cottage piano, on which Imogene could accompany her more than pleasing voice.

Somehow or other, the process is difficult to trace, Endymion not unfrequently found himself at Mrs. Rodney's tea-table. On the first occasion or so, he felt himself a little shy and embarrassed, but it soon became natural to him, and he would often escape from the symposia at Joe's, and, instead of the Divan, find in Warwick Street a more congenial scene. There were generally some young men there, who seemed delighted with the ladies, listened with enthusiasm to Imogene's singing, and were allowed to smoke. They were evidently gentlemen, and indeed Mr. Rodney casually mentioned to Endymion that one of the most frequent guests might some day even be a peer of the realm. Sometimes there was a rubber of whist, and, if wanted, Mrs. Rodney took a hand in it; Endymion sitting apart and conversing with her sister, who amused him by her lively observations, indicating even flashes of culture; but always addressed him without the slightest pretence and with the utmost naturalness. This was not the case with Mr. Rodney; pretence with him was ingrained, and he was at first somewhat embarrassed by the presence of Endymion, as he could hardly maintain before his late patron's son his favourite character of the aristocratic victim of revolution. And yet this drawback was more than counterbalanced by the gratification of his vanity in finding

a Ferrars his habitual guest. Such a luxury seemed a dangerous indulgence, but he could not resist it, and the moth was always flying round the candle. There was no danger, however, and that Mr. Rodney soon found out. Endymion was born with tact, and it came to him as much from goodness of heart as fineness of taste. Mr. Rodney, therefore, soon resumed his anecdotes of great men and his personal experience of their sayings, manners, and customs, with which he was in the habit of enlivening or ornamenting the whist table; occasionally introducing Endymion to the notice of the table by mentioning in a low tone, 'That is Mr. Ferrars, in a certain sense under my care; his father is a privy councillor, and had it not been for the revolution—for I maintain, and always will, the Reform Bill was neither more nor less than a revolution—would probably have been Prime Minister. He was my earliest and my best friend.'

When there were cards, there was always a little supper: a lobster and a roasted potato and that sort of easy thing, and curious drinks, which the sisters mixed and made, and which no one else, at least all said so, could mix and make. On fitting occasions a bottle of champagne appeared, and then the person for whom the wine was produced was sure with wonderment to say, 'Where did you get this champagne, Rodney? Could you get me some?' Mr. Rodney shook his head and scarcely gave a hope, but subsequently, when the praise in consequence had continued and increased, would observe, 'Do you really want some? I cannot promise, but I will try. Of course they will ask a high figure.'

'Anything they like, my dear Rodney.'

And in about a week's time the gentleman was so fortunate as to get his champagne.

There was one subject in which Mr. Rodney appeared to be particularly interested, and that was racing. The turf at that time had not developed into that vast institution of national demoralisation which it now exhibits. That disastrous character may be mainly attributed to the determination of our legislators to put down gaming-houses, which, practically speaking, substi-

tuted for the pernicious folly of a comparatively limited class the ruinous madness of the community. There were many influences by which in the highest classes persons might be discouraged or deterred from play under a roof; and in the great majority of cases such a habit was difficult, not to say impossible, to indulge. But in shutting up gaming-houses, we brought the gaming-table into the street, and its practices became the pursuit of those who would otherwise have never witnessed or even thought of them. No doubt Crockford's had its tragedies, but all its disasters and calamities together would hardly equal a lustre of the ruthless havoc which has ensued from its suppression.

Nevertheless, in 1835 men made books, and Mr. Rodney was not inexpert in a composition which requires no ordinary qualities of character and intelligence; method, judgment, self-restraint, not too much imagination, perception of character, and powers of calculation. All these qualities were now in active demand and exercise; for the Derby was at hand, and the Rodney family, deeply interested in the result, were to attend the celebrated festival.

One of the young gentlemen, who sometimes smoked a cigar and sometimes tasted a lobster in their parlour, and who seemed alike and equally devoted to Mrs. Rodney and her sister, insisted upon taking them to Epsom in his drag, and they themselves were to select the party to accompany them. That was not difficult, for they were naturally all friends of their munificent host with one exception. Imogene stipulated that Endymion should be asked, and Mr. Rodney supported the suggestion. 'He is the son of the privy councillor the Right Hon. William Pitt Ferrars, my earliest and my best friend, and in a certain sense is under my care.'

The drive to the Derby was not then shorn of its humours and glories. It was the Carnival of England, with equipages as numerous and various, and with banter not less quick and witty. It was a bright day—a day, no doubt, of wild hopes and terrible fears, but yet, on the whole, of joy and exultation. And no one

was happier and prouder than pretty Mrs. Rodney, exquisitely dressed and sitting on the box of a patrician drag, beside its noble owner. On the seat behind them was Imogene, with Endymion on one side, and on the other the individual 'who might one day be a peer.' Mr. Rodney and some others, including Mr. Vigo, faced a couple of grooms, who sat with folded arms and unmoved countenances, fastidiously stolid amid all the fun, and grave even when they opened the champagne.

The right horse won. Mr. Rodney and his friends pocketed a good stake, and they demolished their luncheon of luxuries with frantic gaiety.

'It is almost as happy as our little suppers in Warwick Street,' whispered their noble driver to his companion.

'Oh! much more than anything you can find there,' simpered Mrs. Rodney.

'I declare to you, some of the happiest hours of my life have been passed in Warwick Street,' gravely murmured her friend.

'I wish I could believe that,' said Mrs. Rodney.

As for Endymion, he enjoyed himself amazingly. The whole scene was new to him—he had never been at a race before, and this was the most famous of races. He did not know he had betted, but he found he too had won a little money, Mr. Rodney having put him on something, though what that meant he had not the remotest idea. Imogene, however, assured him it was all right—Mr. Rodney constantly put her on something. He enjoyed the luncheon too; the cold chicken, and the French pies, the wondrous salads, and the iced champagne. It seemed that Imogene was always taking care that his plate or his glass should be filled. Everything was delightful, and his noble host, who, always courteous, had hitherto been reserved, called him 'Ferrars.'

What with the fineness of the weather, the inspiration of the excited and countless multitude, the divine stimulus of the luncheon, the kindness of his charming companions, and the general feeling of enjoyment and success that seemed to pervade his being, Endymion felt as if he were almost acting a distin-

guished part in some grand triumph of antiquity, as returning home, the four splendid dark chestnuts swept along, two of their gay company playing bugles, and the grooms sitting with folded arms of haughty indifference.

Just at this moment his eye fell upon an omnibus full, inside and out, of clerks in his office. There was a momentary stoppage, and while he returned the salute of several of them, his quick eye could not avoid recognising the slightly surprised glance of Trenchard, the curious amazement of Seymour Hicks, and the indignant astonishment of St. Barbe.

'Our friend Ferrars seems in tiptop company,' said Trenchard.

'That may have been a countess on the box,' said Seymour Hicks, 'for I observed an earl's coronet on the drag. I cannot make out who it is.'

'There is no more advantage in going with four horses than with two,' said St. Barbe; 'indeed, I believe you go slower. It is mere pride; puffed-up vanity. I should like to send those two grooms with their folded arms to the galleys—I hate those fellows. For my part, I never was behind four horses except in a stage-coach. No peer of the realm ever took me on his drag. However, a day of reckoning will come; the people won't stand this much longer.'

Jawett was not there, for he disapproved of races.

CHAPTER XXII.

ENDYMION had to encounter a rather sharp volley when he went to the office next morning. After some general remarks as to the distinguished party which he had accompanied to the races, Seymour Hicks could not resist inquiring, though with some circumlocution, whether the lady was a countess. The lady was not a countess. Who was the lady? The lady was Mrs. Rodney. Who was Mrs. Rodney? She was the wife of Mr. Rodney, who accompanied her. Was Mr. Rodney a relation of Lord Rodney?

Endymion believed he was not a relation of Lord Rodney. Who was Mr. Rodney then?

'Mr. Rodney is an old friend of my father.'

This natural solution of doubts and difficulties arrested all further inquiry. Generally speaking, the position of Endymion in his new life was satisfactory. He was regular and assiduous in his attendance at his office, was popular with his comrades, and was cherished by his chief, who had even invited him to dinner. His duties were certainly at present mechanical, but they were associated with an interesting profession; and humble as was his lot, he began to feel the pride of public life. He continued to be a regular guest at Joe's, and was careful not to seem to avoid the society of his fellow-clerks in the evenings, for he had an instinctive feeling that it was as well they should not become acquainted with his circle in Warwick Street. And yet to him the attractions of that circle became daily more difficult to resist. And often when he was enduring the purgatory of the Divan, listening to the snarls of St. Barbe over the shameful prosperity of everybody in this world except the snarler, or perhaps went half-price to the pit of Drury Lane with the critical Trenchard, he was, in truth, restless and absent, and his mind was in another place, indulging in visions which he did not care to analyse, but which were very agreeable.

One evening, shortly after the expedition to Epsom, while the rest were playing a rubber, Imogene said to him, 'I wish you to be friends with Mr. Vigo; I think he might be of use to you.'

Mr. Vigo was playing whist at this moment; his partner was Sylvia, and they were playing against Mr. Rodney and Waldershare.

Waldershare was the tenant of the second floor. He was the young gentleman 'who might some day be a peer.' He was a young man of about three or four and twenty years; fair, with short curly brown hair and blue eyes; not exactly handsome, but with a countenance full of expression, and the index of quick emotions, whether of joy or of anger. Waldershare was the only child of a younger son of a patrician house, and had inherited from his father a moderate but easy fortune. He

had been the earliest lodger of the Rodneys, and, taking advantage of the Tory reaction, had just been returned to the House of Commons.

What he would do there was a subject of interesting speculation to his numerous friends, and it may be said admirers. Waldershare was one of those vivid and brilliant organisations which exercise a peculiarly attractive influence on youth. He had been the hero of the debating club at Cambridge, and many believed in consequence that he must become prime minister. He was witty and fanciful, and, though capricious and bad-tempered, could flatter and caress. At Cambridge he had introduced the new Oxford heresy, of which Nigel Penruddock was a votary. Waldershare prayed and fasted, and swore by Laud and Strafford. He took, however, a more eminent degree at Paris than at his original Alma Mater, and becoming passionately addicted to French literature, his views respecting both Church and State became modified—at least in private. His entrance into English society had been highly successful, and as he had a due share of vanity, and was by no means free from worldliness, he had enjoyed and pursued his triumphs. But his versatile nature, which required not only constant, but novel excitement, became palled, even with the society of duchesses. There was a monotony in the splendour of aristocratic life which wearied him, and for some time he had persuaded himself that the only people who understood the secret of existence were the family under whose roof he lodged.

Waldershare was profligate, but sentimental; unprincipled, but romantic; the child of whim, and the slave of an imagination so freakish and deceptive, that it was always impossible to foretell his course. He was alike capable of sacrificing all his feelings to worldly considerations or of forfeiting the world for a visionary caprice. At present his favourite scheme, and one to which he seemed really attached, was to educate Imogene. Under his tuition he had persuaded himself that she would turn out what he styled 'a great woman.' An age of vast change, according to Waldershare, was impending over us. There was no male career in which one could confide. Most men of mark would probably be victims, but 'a great woman'

must always make her way. Whatever the circumstances, she would adapt herself to them; if necessary, would mould and fashion them. His dream was that Imogene should go forth and conquer the world, and that in the sunset of life he should find a refuge in some corner of her palaces.

Imogene was only a child when Waldershare first became a lodger. She used to bring his breakfast to his drawing-room and arrange his table. He encountered her one day, and he requested her to remain, and always preside over his meal. He fell in love with her name, and wrote her a series of sonnets, idealising her past, panegyrising her present, and prophetic of her future life. Imogene, who was neither shy nor obtrusive, was calm amid all his vagaries, humoured his fancies, even when she did not understand them, and read his verses as she would a foreign language which she was determined to master.

Her culture, according to Waldershare, was to be carried on chiefly by conversation. She was not to read, or at least not to read much, until her taste was formed and she had acquired the due share of previous knowledge necessary to profitable study. As Waldershare was eloquent, brilliant, and witty, Imogene listened to him with wondering interest and amusement, even when she found some difficulty in following him; but her apprehension was so quick and her tact so fine, that her progress, though she was almost unconscious of it, was remarkable. Sometimes in the evening, while the others were smoking together or playing whist, Waldershare and Imogene, sitting apart, were engaged in apparently the most interesting converse. It was impossible not to observe the animation and earnestness of Waldershare, and the great attention with which his companion responded to his representations. Yet all this time he was only giving her a lecture on Madame de Sévigné.

Waldershare used to take Imogene to the National Gallery and Hampton Court, and other delightful scenes of popular education, but of late Mrs. Rodney had informed her sister that she was no longer young enough to permit these expeditions. Imogene accepted the announcement without a murmur, but it occasioned Waldershare several sonnets of heartrending remonstrance. Imogene continued, however, to make his breakfast,

and kept his Parliamentary papers in order, which he never could manage, but the mysteries of which Imogene mastered with feminine quickness and precision. Whenever Waldershare was away he always maintained a constant correspondence with Imogene. In this he communicated everything to her without the slightest reserve; describing everything he saw, almost everything he heard, pages teeming with anecdotes of a world of which she could know nothing—the secrets of courts and coteries, memoirs of princes and ministers, of dandies and dames of fashion. 'If anything happens to me,' Waldershare would say to Imogene, 'this correspondence may be worth thousands to you, and when it is published it will connect your name with mine, and assist my grand idea of your becoming "a great woman."'

'But I do not know Mr. Vigo,' whispered Endymion to Imogene.

'But you have met him here, and you went together to Epsom. It is enough. He is going to ask you to dine with him on Saturday. We shall be there, and Mr. Waldershare is going. He has a beautiful place, and it will be very pleasant.' And exactly as Imogene had anticipated, Mr. Vigo, in the course of the evening, did ask Endymion to do him the honour of becoming his guest.

The villa of Mr. Vigo was on the banks of the Thames, and had once belonged to a noble customer. The Palladian mansion contained a suite of chambers of majestic dimensions—lofty ceilings, rich cornices, and vast windows of plate glass; the gardens were rich with the products of conservatories which Mr. Vigo had raised with every modern improvement, and a group of stately cedars supported the dignity of the scene and gave to it a name. Beyond, a winding walk encircled a large field which Mr. Vigo called the park, and which sparkled with gold and silver pheasants, and the keeper lived in a newly-raised habitation at the extreme end, which took the form of a Swiss cottage.

The Rodney family, accompanied by Mr. Waldershare and Endymion, went to the Cedars by water. It was a delightful afternoon of June, the river warm and still, and the soft, fitful

western breeze occasionally rich with the perfume of the gardens of Putney and Chiswick. Waldershare talked the whole way. It was a rhapsody of fancy, fun, knowledge, anecdote, brilliant badinage—even passionate seriousness. Sometimes he recited poetry, and his voice was musical; and then, when he had attuned his companions to a sentimental pitch, he would break into mockery, and touch with delicate satire every mood of human feeling. Endymion listened to him in silence and admiration. He had never heard Waldershare talk before, and he had never heard anybody like him. All this time, what was now, and ever, remarkable in Waldershare were his manners. They were finished, even to courtliness. Affable and winning, he was never familiar. He always addressed Sylvia as if she were one of those duchesses round whom he used to linger. He would bow deferentially to her remarks, and elicit from some of her casual observations an acute or graceful meaning, of which she herself was by no means conscious. The bow of Waldershare was a study. Its grace and ceremony must have been organic; for there was no traditionary type in existence from which he could have derived or inherited it. He certainly addressed Imogene and spoke of her by her Christian name; but this was partly because he was in love with the name, and partly because he would persist in still treating her as a child. But his manner to her always was that of tender respect. She was almost as silent as Endymion during their voyage, but not less attentive to her friend. Mr. Rodney was generally silent, and never opened his mouth on this occasion except in answer to an inquiry from his wife as to whom a villa might belong, and it seemed always that he knew every villa, and every one to whom they belonged.

The sisters were in demi-toilette, which seemed artless, though in fact it was profoundly devised. Sylvia was the only person who really understood the meaning of 'simplex munditiis,' and this was one of the secrets of her success. There were some ladies, on the lawn of the Cedars when they arrived, not exactly of their school, and who were finely and fully dressed. Mrs. Gamme was the wife of a sporting attorney, a friend of Mr. Vigo, and who also, having a villa at hand, was looked upon as

a country neighbour. Mrs. Gamme was universally recognised to be a fine woman, and she dressed up to her reputation. She was a famous whist-player at high points, and dealt the cards with hands covered with diamond rings. Another country neighbour was the chief partner in the celebrated firm of Hooghley, Dacca, & Co., dealers in Indian and other shawls. Mr. Hooghley had married a celebrated actress, and was proud and a little jealous of his wife. Mrs. Hooghley had always an opportunity at the Cedars of meeting some friends in her former profession, for Mr. Vigo liked to be surrounded by genius and art. 'I must have talent,' he would exclaim, as he looked round at the amusing and motley multitude assembled at his splendid entertainments. And to-day upon his lawn might be observed the first tenor of the opera and a prima-donna who had just arrived, several celebrated members of the English stage of both sexes, artists of great reputation, whose principal works already adorned the well-selected walls of the Cedars, a danseuse or two of celebrity, some literary men, as Mr. Vigo styled them, who were chiefly brethren of the periodical press, and more than one member of either House of Parliament.

Just as the party were preparing to leave the lawn and enter the dining-room arrived, breathless and glowing, the young earl who had driven the Rodneys to the Derby.

'A shaver, my dear Vigo! Only returned to town this afternoon, and found your invitation. How fortunate!' And then he looked around, and recognising Mrs. Rodney, was immediately at her side. 'I must have the honour of taking you into dinner. I got your note, but only by this morning's post.'

The dinner was a banquet,—a choice bouquet before every guest, turtle and venison and piles of whitebait, and pine-apples of prodigious size, and bunches of grapes that had gained prizes. The champagne seemed to flow in fountains, and was only interrupted that the guest might quaff Burgundy or taste Tokay. But what was more delightful than all was the enjoyment of all present, and especially of their host. That is a rare sight. Banquets are not rare, nor choice guests, nor gracious hosts; but when do we ever see a person enjoy anything? But these gay children of art and whim, and successful labour and happy

speculation, some of them very rich and some of them without a sou, seemed only to think of the festive hour and all its joys. Neither wealth nor poverty brought them cares. Every face sparkled, every word seemed witty, and every sound seemed sweet. A band played upon the lawn during the dinner, and were succeeded, when the dessert commenced, by strange choruses from singers of some foreign land, who for the first time aired their picturesque costumes on the banks of the Thames.

When the ladies had withdrawn to the saloon, the first comic singer of the age excelled himself; and when they rejoined their fair friends, the primo-tenore and the prima-donna gave them a grand scena, succeeded by the English performers in a favourite scene from a famous farce. Then Mrs. Gamme had an opportunity of dealing with her diamond rings, and the rest danced—a waltz of whirling grace, or merry cotillon of jocund bouquets.

'Well, Clarence,' said Waldershare to the young earl, as they stood for a moment apart, 'was I right?'

'By Jove! yes. It is the only life. You were quite right. We should indeed be fools to sacrifice ourselves to the conventional.'

The Rodney party returned home in the drag of the last speaker. They were the last to retire, as Mr. Vigo wished for one cigar with his noble friend. As he bade farewell, and cordially, to Endymion, he said, 'Call on me to-morrow morning in Burlington Street in your way to your office. Do not mind the hour. I am an early bird.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

'It is no favour,' said Mr. Vigo; 'it is not even an act of friendliness; it is a freak, and it is my freak; the favour, if there be one, is conferred by you.'

'But I really do not know what to say,' said Endymion, hesitating and confused.

'I am not a classical scholar,' said Mr. Vigo, 'but there are two things which I think I understand—men and horses. I like to back them both when I think they ought to win.'

'But I am scarcely a man,' said Endymion, rather piteously, 'and I sometimes think I shall never win anything.'

'That is my affair,' replied Mr. Vigo; 'you are a yearling, and I have formed my judgment as to your capacity. What I wish to do in your case is what I have done in others, and some memorable ones. Dress does not make a man, but it often makes a successful one. The most precious stone, you know, must be cut and polished. I shall enter your name in my books for an unlimited credit, and no account to be settled till you are a privy councillor. I do not limit the credit, because you are a man of sense and a gentleman, and will not abuse it. But be quite as careful not to stint yourself as not to be needlessly extravagant. In the first instance, you would be interfering with my experiment, and that would not be fair.'

This conversation took place in Mr. Vigo's counting-house the morning after the entertainment at his villa. Endymion called upon Mr. Vigo in his way to his office, as he had been requested to do, and Mr. Vigo had expressed his wishes and intentions with regard to Endymion, as intimated in the preceding remarks.

'I have known many an heiress lost by her suitor being ill-dressed,' said Mr. Vigo. 'You must dress according to your age, your pursuits, your object in life; you must dress too, in some cases, according to your set. In youth a little fancy is rather expected, but if political life be your object, it should be avoided, at least after one-and-twenty. I am dressing two brothers now, men of considerable position; one is a mere man of pleasure, the other will probably be a minister of state. They are as like as two peas, but were I to dress the dandy and the minister the same, it would be bad taste—it would be ridiculous. No man gives me the trouble which Lord Eglantine does; he has not made up his mind whether he will be a great poet or prime minister. "You must choose, my lord," I tell him. "I cannot send you out looking like Lord Byron if you mean to be a Canning or a Pitt." I have dressed a great many of our statesmen and orators, and I always dressed them according to their style and the nature of their duties. What all men should avoid is the "shabby genteel." No man ever gets over it. I will save you from that. You had better be in rags.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

When the twins had separated, they had resolved on a system of communication which had been, at least on the part of Myra, scrupulously maintained. They were to interchange letters every week, and each letter was to assume, if possible, the shape of a journal, so that when they again met no portion of the interval should be a blank in their past lives. There were few incidents in the existence of Myra; a book, a walk, a visit to the rectory, were among the chief. The occupations of their father were unchanged, and his health seemed sustained, but that of her mother was not satisfactory. Mrs. Ferrars had never rallied since the last discomfiture of her political hopes, and had never resumed her previous tenour of life. She was secluded, her spirits uncertain, moods of depression succeeded by fits of unaccountable excitement, and, on the whole, Myra feared a general and chronic disturbance of her nervous system. His sister prepared Endymion for encountering a great change in their parent when he returned home. Myra, however, never expatiated on the affairs of Hurstley. Her annals in this respect were somewhat dry. She fulfilled her promise of recording them, but no more. Her pen was fuller and more eloquent in her comments on the life of her brother, and of the new characters with whom he had become acquainted. She delighted to hear about Mr. Jawett, and especially about Mr. St. Barbe, and was much pleased that he had been to the Derby, though she did not exactly collect who were his companions. Did he go with that kind Mr. Trenchard? It would seem that Endymion's account of the Rodney family had been limited to vague though earnest acknowledgments of their great civility and attention, which added much to the comfort of his life. Impelled by some of these grateful though general remarks, Mrs. Ferrars, in a paroxysm of stately gratitude, had sent a missive to Sylvia, such as a sovereign might address to a deserving subject, at the same time acknowledging and commending her duteous services. Such was the old domestic superstition of the Rodneys, that, with all

their worldliness, they treasured this effusion as if it had really emanated from the centre of power and courtly favour.

Myra, in her anticipations of speedily meeting her brother, was doomed to disappointment. She had counted on Endymion obtaining some holidays in the usual recess, but in consequence of having so recently joined the office, Endymion was retained for summer and autumnal work, and not until Christmas was there any prospect of his returning home.

The interval between midsummer and that period, though not devoid of seasons of monotony and loneliness, passed in a way not altogether unprofitable to Endymion. Waldershare, who had begun to notice him, seemed to become interested in his career. Waldershare knew all about his historic ancestor, Endymion Carey. The bubbling imagination of Waldershare clustered with a sort of wild fascination round a living link with the age of the cavaliers. He had some Stuart blood in his veins, and his ancestors had fallen at Edgehill and Marston Moor. Waldershare, whose fancies alternated between Strafford and St. Just, Archbishop Laud and the Goddess of Reason, reverted for the moment to his visions on the banks of the Cam, and the brilliant rhapsodies of his boyhood. His converse with Nigel Penruddock had prepared Endymion in some degree for these mysteries, and perhaps it was because Waldershare found that Endymion was by no means ill-informed on these matters, and therefore there was less opportunity of dazzling and moulding him, which was a passion with Waldershare, that he soon quitted the Great Rebellion for pastures new, and impressed upon his pupil that all that had occurred before the French Revolution was ancient history. The French Revolution had introduced the cosmopolitan principle into human affairs instead of the national, and no public man could succeed who did not comprehend and acknowledge that truth. Waldershare lent Endymion books, and books with which otherwise he would not have become acquainted. Unconsciously to himself, the talk of Waldershare, teeming with knowledge, and fancy, and playfulness, and airy sarcasm of life, taught him something of the art of conversation—to be prompt without

being stubborn, to refute without argument, and to clothe grave matters in a motley garb.

But in August Waldershare disappeared, and at the beginning of September, even the Rodneys had gone to Margate. St. Barbe was the only clerk left in Endymion's room. They dined together almost every day, and went on the top of an omnibus to many a suburban paradise. 'I tell you what,' said St. Barbe, as they were watching one day together the humours of the world in the crowded tea-garden and bustling bowling-green of Canonbury Tavern; 'a fellow might get a good chapter out of this scene. I could do it, but I will not. What is the use of lavishing one's brains on an ungrateful world? Why, if that fellow Gushy were to write a description of this place, which he would do like a penny-a-liner drunk with ginger beer, every countess in Mayfair would be reading him, not knowing, the idiot, whether she ought to smile or shed tears, and sending him cards with "at home" upon them as large as life. Oh! it is disgusting! absolutely disgusting. It is a nefarious world, sir. You will find it out some day. I am as much robbed by that fellow Gushy as men are on the highway. He is appropriating my income, and the income of thousands of honest fellows. And then he pretends he is writing for the people! The people! What does he know about the people? Annals of the New Cut and Saffron Hill. He thinks he will frighten some lord, who will ask him to dinner. And that he calls Progress. I hardly know which is the worst class in this country—the aristocracy, the middle class, or what they call the people. I hate them all.'

About the fall of the leaf the offices were all filled again, and among the rest Trenchard returned. 'His brother has been ill,' said St. Barbe. 'They say that Trenchard is very fond of him. Fond of a brother who keeps him out of four thousand pounds per annum! What will man not say? And yet I could not go and congratulate Trenchard on his brother's death. It would be "bad taste." Trenchard would perhaps never speak to me again, though he had been lying awake all night chuckling over the event. And Gushy takes an amiable view of this

world of hypocrisy and plunder. And that is why Gushy is so popular!'

There was one incident at the beginning of November, which eventually exercised no mean influence on the life of Endymion. Trenchard offered one evening to introduce him as a guest to a celebrated debating society, of which Trenchard was a distinguished member. This society had grown out of the Union at Cambridge, and was originally intended to have been a metropolitan branch of that famous association. But in process of time it was found that such a constitution was too limited to ensure those numbers and that variety of mind desirable in such an institution. It was therefore opened to the whole world duly qualified. The predominant element, however, for a long time consisted of Cambridge men.

This society used to meet in a large room, fitted up as much like the House of Commons as possible, and which was in Freemasons' Tavern, in Great Queen Street. Some hundred and fifty members were present when Endymion paid his first visit there, and the scene to Endymion was novel and deeply interesting. Though only a guest, he was permitted to sit in the body of the chamber, by the side of Trenchard, who kindly gave him some information, as the proceedings advanced, as to the principal personages who took part in them.

The question to-night was, whether the decapitation of Charles the First were a justifiable act, and the debate was opened in the affirmative by a young man with a singularly sunny face and a voice of music. His statement was clear and calm. Though nothing could be more uncompromising than his opinions, it seemed that nothing could be fairer than his facts.

'That is Hortensius,' said Trenchard; 'he will be called this term. They say he did nothing at the university, and is too idle to do anything at the bar; but I think highly of him. You should hear him in reply.'

The opening speech was seconded by a very young man, in a most artificial style, remarkable for its superfluity of intended sarcasm, which was delivered in a highly elaborate tone, so that the speaker seemed severe without being keen.

'Tis the new Cambridge style,' whispered Trenchard, 'but it will not go down here.'

The question having been launched, Spruce arose, a very neat speaker; a little too mechanical, but plausible. Endymion was astonished at the dexterous turns in his own favour which he gave to many of the statements of Hortensius, and how he mangled and massacred the seconder, who had made a mistake in a date.

'He is the Tory leader,' said Trenchard. 'There are not twenty Tories in the Union, but we always listen to him. He is sharp, Jawett will answer him.'

And, accordingly, that great man rose. Jawett, in dulcet tones of philanthropy, intimated that he was not opposed to the decapitation of kings; on the contrary, if there were no other way of getting rid of them, he would have recourse to such a method. But he did not think the case before them was justifiable.

'Always crotchety,' whispered Trenchard.

Jawett thought the whole conception of the opening speech erroneous. It proceeded on the assumption that the execution of Charles was the act of the people; on the contrary, it was an intrigue of Cromwell, who was the only person who profited by it.

Cromwell was vindicated and panegyrised in a flaming speech by Montreal, who took this opportunity of denouncing alike kings and bishops, Church and State, with powerful invective, terminating his address by the expression of an earnest hope that he might be spared to witness the inevitable Commonwealth of England.

'He only lost his election for Rattleton by ten votes,' said Trenchard. 'We call him the Lord Protector, and his friends here think he will be so.'

The debate was concluded, after another hour, by Hortensius, and Endymion was struck by the contrast between his first and second manner. Safe from reply, and reckless in his security, it is not easy to describe the audacity of his retorts, or the tumult of his eloquence. Rapid, sarcastic, humorous, picturesque, impassioned, he seemed to carry everything before him, and to

resemble his former self in nothing but the music of his voice, which lent melody to scorn, and sometimes reached the depth of pathos.

Endymion walked home with Mr. Trenchard, and in a musing mood. 'I should not care how lazy I was,' said Endymion, 'if I could speak like Hortensius.'

CHAPTER XXV.

The snow was falling about the time when the Swindon coach, in which Endymion was a passenger, was expected at Hurstley, and the snow had been falling all day. Nothing had been more dreary than the outward world, or less entitled to the merry epithet which is the privilege of the season. The gardener had been despatched to the village inn, where the coach stopped, with a lantern and cloaks and umbrellas. Within the house the huge blocks of smouldering beech sent forth a hospitable heat, and, whenever there was a sound, Myra threw cones on the inflamed mass, that Endymion might be welcomed with a blaze. Mrs. Ferrars, who had appeared to-day, though late, and had been very nervous and excited, broke down half an hour before her son could arrive, and, murmuring that she would reappear, had retired. Her husband was apparently reading, but his eye wandered and his mind was absent from the volume.

The dogs barked, Mr. Ferrars threw down his book, Myra forgot her cones; the door burst open, and she was in her brother's arms.

'And where is mamma?' said Endymion, after he had greeted his father.

'She will be here directly,' said Mr. Ferrars. 'You are late, and the suspense of your arrival a little agitated her.'

Three quarters of a year had elapsed since the twins had parted, and they were at that period of life when such an interval often produces no slight changes in personal appearance. Endymion, always tall for his years, had considerably grown; his air, and manner, and dress were distinguished. But three quarters of a year had produced a still greater effect upon his

sister. He had left her a beautiful girl: her beauty was not less striking, but it was now the beauty of a woman. Her mien was radiant but commanding, and her brow, always remarkable, was singularly impressive.

They stood in animated converse before the fire, Endymion between his father and his sister and retaining of each a hand, when Mr. Ferrars nodded to Myra and said, 'I think now;' and Myra, not reluctantly, but not with happy eagerness, left the room.

'She is gone for your poor mother,' said Mr. Ferrars; 'we are uneasy about her, my dear boy.'

Myra was some time away, and when she returned she was alone. 'She says she must see him first in her room,' said Myra, in a low voice, to her father; 'but that will never do; you or I must go with him.'

'You had better go,' said Mr. Ferrars.

She took her brother's hand and led him away. 'I go with you, to prevent dreadful scenes,' said his sister on the staircase. 'Try to behave just as in old times, and as if you saw no change.'

Myra went into the chamber first, to give to her mother, if possible, the keynote of the interview, and of which she had already furnished the prelude. 'We are all so happy to see Endymion again, dear mamma. Papa is quite gay.'

And then when Endymion, answering his sister's beckon, entered, Mrs. Ferrars rushed forward with a sort of laugh, and cried out, 'Oh! I am so happy to see you again, my child. I feel quite gay.'

He embraced her, but he could not believe it was his mother. A visage at once haggard and bloated had supplanted that soft and rich countenance which had captivated so many. A robe concealed her attenuated frame; but the lustrous eyes were bleared and bloodshot, and the accents of the voice, which used to be at once melodious and a little drawling, hoarse, harsh, and hurried.

She never stopped talking; but it was all in one key, and that the prescribed one—her happiness at his arrival, the universal gaiety it had produced, and the merry Christmas they

were to keep. After a time she began to recur to the past, and to sigh; but instantly Myra interfered with 'You know, mamma, you are to dine downstairs to-day, and you will hardly have time to dress;' and she motioned to Endymion to retire.

Mrs. Ferrars kept the dinner waiting a long time, and, when she entered the room, it was evident that she was painfully excited. She had a cap on, and had used some rouge.

'Endymion must take me in to dinner,' she hurriedly exclaimed as she entered, and then grasped her son's arm.

It seemed a happy and even a merry dinner, and yet there was something about it forced and constrained. Mrs. Ferrars talked a great deal, and Endymion told them a great many anecdotes of those men and things which most interested them, and Myra seemed to be absorbed in his remarks and narratives, and his mother would drink his health more than once, when suddenly she went into hysterics, and all was anarchy. Mr. Ferrars looked distressed and infinitely sad; and Myra, putting her arm round her mother, and whispering words of calm or comfort, managed to lead her out of the room, and neither of them returned.

'Poor creature!' said Mr. Ferrars, with a sigh. 'Seeing you has been too much for her.'

The next morning Endymion and his sister paid a visit to the rectory, and there they met Nigel, who was passing his Christmas at home. This was a happy meeting. The rector had written an essay on squirrels, and showed them a glass containing that sportive little animal in all its frolic forms. Farmer Thornberry had ordered a path to be cleared on the green from the hall to the rectory; and 'that is all,' said Mrs. Penruddock, 'we have to walk upon, except the high road. The snow has drifted to such a degree that it is impossible to get to the Chase. I went out the day before yesterday with Carlo as a guide. When I did not clearly make out my way, I sent him forward, and sometimes I could only see his black head emerging from the snow. So I had to retreat.'

Mrs. Ferrars did not appear this day. Endymion visited her in her room. He found her flighty and incoherent. She seemed to think that he had returned permanently to Hurstley, and said

she never had any good opinion of the scheme of his leaving them. If it had been the Foreign Office, as was promised, and his father had been in the Cabinet, which was his right, it might have been all very well. But, if he were to leave home, he ought to have gone into the Guards, and it was not too late. And then they might live in a small house in town, and look after him. There were small houses in Wilton Crescent, which would do very well. Besides, she herself wanted change of air. Hurstley did not agree with her. She had no appetite. She never was well except in London, or Wimbledon. She wished that, as Endymion was here, he would speak to his father on the subject. She saw no reason why they should not live at their place at Wimbledon as well as here. It was not so large a house, and, therefore, would not be so expensive.

Endymion's holiday was only to last a week, and Myra seemed jealous of his sparing any portion of it to Nigel; yet the rector's son was sedulous in his endeavours to enjoy the society of his former companion. There seemed some reason for his calling at the hall every day. Mr. Ferrars broke through his habits, and invited Nigel to dine with them; and after dinner, saying that he would visit Mrs. Ferrars, who was unwell, left them alone. It was the only time they had yet been alone. Endymion found that there was no change in the feelings and views of Nigel respecting Church matters, except that his sentiments and opinions were more assured, and, if possible, more advanced. He would not tolerate any reference to the state of the nation; it was the state of the Church which engrossed his being. No government was endurable that was not divine. The Church was divine, and on that he took his stand.

Nigel was to take his degree next term, and orders as soon as possible. He looked forward with confidence, after doubtless a period of disturbance, confusion, probably violence, and even anarchy, to the establishment of an ecclesiastical polity that would be catholic throughout the realm. Endymion just intimated the very contrary opinions that Jawett held upon these matters, and mentioned, though not as an adherent, some of the cosmopolitan sentiments of Waldershare.

'The Church is cosmopolitan,' said Nigel; 'the only practic-

able means by which you can attain to identity of motive and action.'

Then they rejoined Myra, but Nigel soon recurred to the absorbing theme. His powers had much developed since he and Endymion used to wander together over Hurstley Chase. He had great eloquence, his views were startling and commanding, and his expressions forcible and picturesque. All was heightened, too, by his striking personal appearance and the beauty of his voice. He seemed something between a young prophet and an inquisitor; a remarkable blending of enthusiasm and self-control.

A person more experienced in human nature than Endymion might have observed, that all this time, while Nigel was to all appearance chiefly addressing himself to Endymion, he was, in fact, endeavouring to impress his sister. Endymion knew, from the correspondence of Myra, that Nigel had been, especially in the summer, much at Hurstley; and when he was alone with his sister, he could not help remarking, 'Nigel is as strong as ever in his views.'

'Yes,' she replied; 'he is very clever and very good-looking. It is a pity he is going into the Church. I do not like clergymen.'

On the third day of the visit, Mrs. Ferrars was announced to be unwell, and in the evening very unwell; and Mr. Ferrars sent to the nearest medical man, and he was distant, to attend her. The medical man did not arrive until past midnight, and, after visiting his patient, looked grave. She had fever, but of what character it was difficult to decide. The medical man had brought some remedies with him, and he stayed the night at the hall. It was a night of anxiety and alarm, and the household did not retire until nearly the break of dawn.

The next day it seemed that the whole of the Penruddock family were in the house. Mrs. Penruddock insisted on nursing Mrs. Ferrars, and her husband looked as if he thought he might be wanted. It was unreasonable that Nigel should be left alone. His presence, always pleasing, was a relief to an anxious family, and who were beginning to get alarmed. The fever did not subside. On the contrary, it increased, and there were other dangerous symptoms. There was a physician of fame at Oxford, whom Nigel wished they would call in. Matters were too pressing

to wait for posts, and too complicated to trust to an ordinary messenger. Nigel, who was always well mounted, was in his saddle in an instant. He seemed to be all resource, consolation, and energy: 'If I am fortunate, he will be here in four hours; at all events, I will not return alone.'

Four terrible hours were these: Mr. Ferrars, restless and sad, and listening with a vacant or an absent look to the kind and unceasing talk of the rector; Myra, silent in her mother's chamber; and Endymion, wandering about alone with his eyes full of tears. This was the Merrie Christmas he had talked of, and this his long-looked-for holiday. He could think of nothing but his mother's kindness; and the days gone by, when she was so bright and happy, came back to him with painful vividness. It seemed to him that he belonged to a doomed and unhappy family. Youth and its unconscious mood had hitherto driven this thought from his mind; but it occurred to him now, and would not be driven away.

Nigel was fortunate. Before sunset he returned to Hurstley in a postchaise with the Oxford physician, whom he had furnished with an able and accurate diagnosis of the case. All that art could devise, and all that devotion could suggest, were lavished on the sufferer, but in vain; and four days afterwards, the last day of Endymion's long-awaited holiday, Mr. Ferrars closed for ever the eyes of that brilliant being, who, with some weaknesses, but many noble qualities, had shared with no unequal spirit the splendour and the adversity of his existence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Nigel took a high degree and obtained first-class honours. He was ordained by the bishop of the diocese as soon after as possible. His companions, who looked up to him with every expectation of his eminence and influence, were disappointed, however, in the course of life on which he decided. It was different from that which he had led them to suppose it would be. They had counted on his becoming a resident light of the University, filling its highest offices, and ultimately reaching the

loftiest stations in the Church. Instead of that he announced that he had resolved to become a curate to his father, and that he was about to bury himself in the solitude of Hurstley.

It was in the early summer following the death of Mrs. Ferrars that he settled there. He was frequently at the hall, and became intimate with Mr. Ferrars. Notwithstanding the difference of age, there was between them a sympathy of knowledge and thought. In spite of his decided mind, Nigel listened to Mr. Ferrars with deference, soliciting his judgment, and hanging, as it were, on his accents of wise experience and refined taste. So Nigel became a favourite with Mr. Ferrars; for there are few things more flattering than the graceful submission of an accomplished intellect, and, when accompanied by youth, the spell is sometimes fascinating.

The death of his wife seemed to have been a great blow to Mr. Ferrars. The expression of his careworn, yet still handsome, countenance became, if possible, more saddened. It was with difficulty that his daughter could induce him to take exercise, and he had lost altogether that seeming interest in their outer world which once at least he affected to feel. Myra, though ever content to be alone, had given up herself much to her father since his great sorrow; but she felt that her efforts to distract him from his broodings were not eminently successful, and she hailed with a feeling of relief the establishment of Nigel in the parish, and the consequent intimacy that arose between him and her father.

Nigel and Myra were necessarily under these circumstances thrown much together. As time advanced he passed his evenings generally at the hall, for he was a proficient in the only game which interested Mr. Ferrars, and that was chess. Reading and writing all day, Mr. Ferrars required some remission of attention, and his relaxation was chess. Before the games, and between the games, and during delightful tea-time, and for the happy quarter of an hour which ensued when the chief employment of the evening ceased, Nigel appealed much to Myra, and endeavoured to draw out her mind and feelings. He lent her books, and books that favoured, indirectly at least, his own peculiar views—volumes of divine poesy that had none of the

twang of psalmody, tales of tender and sometimes wild and brilliant fancy, but ever full of symbolic truth.

Chess-playing requires complete abstraction, and Nigel, though he was a double first, occasionally lost a game from a lapse in that condensed attention that secures triumph. The fact is, he was too frequently thinking of something else besides the moves on the board, and his ear was engaged while his eye wandered, if Myra chanced to rise from her seat or make the slightest observation.

The woods were beginning to assume the first fair livery of autumn, when it is beautiful without decay. The lime and the larch had not yet dropped a golden leaf, and the burnished beeches flamed in the sun. Every now and then an occasional oak or elm rose, still as full of deep green foliage as if it were midsummer; while the dark verdure of the pines sprang up with effective contrast amid the gleaming and resplendent chestnuts.

There was a glade at Hurstley, bounded on each side with masses of yew, their dark green forms now studded with crimson berries. Myra was walking one morning in this glade when she met Nigel, who was on one of his daily pilgrimages, and he turned round and walked by her side.

'I am sure I cannot give you news of your brother,' he said, 'but I have had a letter this morning from Endymion. He seems to take great interest in his debating club.'

'I am so glad he has become a member of it,' said Myra. 'That kind Mr. Trenchard, whom I shall never see to thank him for all his goodness to Endymion, proposed him. It occupies his evenings twice a week, and then it gives him subjects to think of and read up in the interval.'

'Yes; it is a good thing,' said Nigel moodily; 'and if he is destined for public life, which perhaps he may be, no contemptible discipline.'

'Dear boy!' said Myra, with a sigh. 'I do not see what public life he is destined to, except slaving at a desk. But sometimes one has dreams.'

'Yes; we all have dreams,' said Nigel, with an air of abstraction.

'It is impossible to resist the fascination of a fine autumnal morn,' said Myra; 'but give me the long days of summer and its rich leafy joys. I like to wander about, and dine at nine o'clock.'

'Delightful, doubtless, with a sympathising companion.'

'Endymion was such a charming companion,' said Myra.

'But he has left us,' said Nigel; 'and you are alone.'

'I am alone,' said Myra; 'but I am used to solitude, and I can think of him.'

'Would I were Endymion,' said Nigel, 'to be thought of by you!'

Myra looked at him with something of a stare; but he continued—

'All seasons would be to me fascination, were I only by your side. Yes; I can no longer repress the irresistible confession of my love. I am here, and I am here only, because I love you. I quitted Oxford and all its pride that I might have the occasional delight of being your companion. I was not presumptuous in my thoughts, and believed that would content me; but I can no longer resist the consummate spell, and I offer you my heart and my life.'

'I am amazed; I am a little overwhelmed,' said Myra. 'Pardon me, dear Mr. Penruddock—dear Nigel—you speak of things of which I have not thought.'

'Think of them! I implore you to think of them, and now!'

'We are a fallen family,' said Myra, 'perhaps a doomed one. We are not people to connect yourself with. You have witnessed some of our sorrows, and soothed them. I shall be ever grateful to you for the past. But I sometimes feel our cup is not yet full, and I have long resolved to bear my cross alone. But, irrespective of all other considerations, I can never leave my father.'

'I have spoken to your father,' said Nigel, 'and he approved my suit.'

'While my father lives I shall not quit him,' said Myra; 'but, let me not mislead you, I do not live for my father—I live for another.'

'For another?' inquired Nigel, with anxiety.

'For one you know. My life is devoted to Endymion. There is a mystic bond between us, originating, perhaps, in the circumstance of our birth; for we are twins. I never mean to embarrass him with a sister's love, and perhaps hereafter may see less of him even than I see now; but I shall be in the world, whatever be my lot, high or low—the active, stirring world—working for him, thinking only of him. Yes; moulding events and circumstances in his favour;' and she spoke with fiery animation. 'I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose must accomplish it, and that nothing can resist a will that will stake even existence for its fulfilment.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

Endymion had returned to his labours, after the death of his mother, much dispirited. Though young and hopeful, his tender heart could not be insensible to the tragic end. There is anguish in the recollection that we have not adequately appreciated the affection of those whom we have loved and lost. It tortured him to feel that he had often accepted with carelessness or indifference the homage of a heart that had been to him ever faithful in its multiplied devotion. Then, though he was not of a melancholy and brooding nature, in this moment of bereavement he could not drive from his mind the consciousness that there had long been hanging over his home a dark lot, as it were, of progressive adversity. His family seemed always sinking, and he felt conscious how the sanguine spirit of his mother had sustained them in their trials. His father had already made him the depositary of his hopeless cares; and if anything happened to that father, old and worn out before his time, what would become of Myra?

Nigel, who in their great calamity seemed to have thought of everything, and to have done everything, had written to the chief of the office, and also to Mr. Trenchard, explaining the cause of the absence of Endymion from his duties. There were

no explanations, therefore, necessary when he reappeared; no complaints, but only sympathy and general kindness. In Warwick Street there was unaffected sorrow; Sylvia wept and went into the prettiest mourning for her patroness, and Mr. Rodney wore a crape on his hat. 'I never saw her,' said Imogene, 'but I am told she was heavenly.'

Waldershare was very kind to Endymion, and used to take him to the House of Commons on interesting evenings, and, if he succeeded in getting Endymion a place under the gallery, would come and talk to him in the course of the night, and sometimes introduce him to the mysteries of Bellamy's, where Endymion had the satisfaction of partaking of a steak in the presence of statesmen and senators.

'You are in the precincts of public life,' said Waldershare; 'and if you ever enter it, which I think you will,' he would add thoughtfully, 'it will be interesting for you to remember that you have seen these characters, many of whom will then have passed away. Like the shades of a magic lantern,' he added, with something between a sigh and a smile. 'One of my constituents sent me a homily this morning, the burthen of which was, I never thought of death. The idiot! I never think of anything else. It is my weakness. One should never think of death. One should think of life. That is real piety.'

This spring and summer were passed tranquilly by Endymion, but not unprofitably. He never went to any place of public amusement, and, cherishing his sorrow, declined those slight openings to social life which occasionally offered themselves even to him; but he attended his debating club with regularity, and, though silent, studied every subject which was brought before it. It interested him to compare their sayings and doings with those of the House of Commons, and he found advantage in the critical comparison. Though not in what is styled society, his mind did not rust from the want of intelligent companions. The clear perception, accurate knowledge, and unerring judgment of Trenchard, the fantastic cynicism of St. Barbe, and all the stores of the exuberant and imaginative Waldershare were brought to bear on a young and plastic intelligence, gifted with a quick though not a too profound sen-

sibility which soon ripened into tact, and which, after due discrimination, was tenacious of beneficial impressions.

In the autumn, Endymion returned home for a long visit and a happy one. He found Nigel settled at Hurstley, and almost domesticated at the hall; his father more cheerful than his sister's earlier letters had led him to suppose; and she herself so delighted by the constant companionship of her brother that she seemed to have resumed all her original pride of life.

Nearly two years' acquaintance, however limited, with the world, had already exercised a ripening influence over Endymion. Nigel soon perceived this, though, with a native tact which circumstances had developed, Endymion avoided obtruding his new conclusions upon his former instructor. But that deep and eager spirit, unwilling ever to let a votary escape, and absorbed intellectually by one vast idea, would not be baffled. Nigel had not renounced the early view of Endymion taking orders, and spoke of his London life as an incident which, with his youth, he might in time only look upon as an episode in his existence.

'I trust I shall ever be a devoted son of the Church,' said Endymion; 'but I confess I feel no predisposition to take orders, even if I had the opportunity, which probably I never shall have. If I were to choose my career it would be public life. I am on the last step of the ladder, and I do not suppose that I can ever be anything but a drudge. But even that would interest me. It brings one in contact with those who are playing the great game. One at least fancies one comprehends something of the government of mankind. Mr. Waldershare takes me often to the House of Commons, and I must say, I am passionately fond of it.'

After Endymion's return to London that scene occurred between Nigel and Myra, in the glade at Hurstley, which we have noticed in the preceding chapter. In the evening of that day Nigel did not pay his accustomed visit to the hall, and the father and the daughter were alone. Then it was, notwithstanding evident agitation, and even with some degree of solemnity, that Mr. Ferrars broke to his daughter that there was a subject on which he wished seriously to confer with her.

'Is it about Nigel?' she inquired with calmness.

'It is about Nigel.'

'I have seen him, and he has spoken to me.'

'And what have you replied?'

'What I fear will not be satisfactory to you, sir, but what is irrevocable.'

'Your union would give me life and hope,' said Mr. Ferrars; and then, as she remained silent, he continued after a pause: 'For its happiness there seems every security. He is of good family, and with adequate means, and, I firmly believe, no inconsiderable future. His abilities are already recognised; his disposition is noble. As for his personal qualities, you are a fitter judge than I am; but, for my part, I never saw a countenance that more became the beauty and nobility of his character.'

'I think him very good-looking,' said Myra, 'and there is no doubt he is clever, and he has shown himself, on more than one occasion, amiable.'

'Then what more can you require?' said Mr. Ferrars.

'I require nothing; I do not wish to marry.'

'But, my daughter, my dearest daughter,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'bear with the anxiety of a parent who is at least devoted to you. Our separation would be my last and severest sorrow, and I have had many; but there is no necessity to consider that case, for Nigel is content, is more than content, to live as your husband under this roof.'

'So he told me.'

'And that removed one objection that you might naturally feel?'

'I certainly should never leave you, sir,' said Myra, 'and I told Nigel so; but that contingency had nothing to do with my decision. I declined his offer, because I have no wish to marry.'

'Women are born to be married,' said Mr. Ferrars.

'And yet I believe most marriages are unhappy,' said Myra.

'Oh! if your objection to marry Nigel arises from an abstract objection to marriage itself,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'it is a subject which we might talk over calmly, and perhaps remove your prejudices.'

'I have no prejudices against marriage,' rejoined Myra. 'It is likely enough that I may marry some day, and probably make an unhappy marriage; but that is not the question before us. It is whether I should marry Nigel. That cannot be, my dear father, and he knows it. I have assured him so in a manner which cannot be mistaken.'

'We are a doomed family!' exclaimed the unhappy Mr. Ferrars, clasping his hands.

'So I have long felt,' said Myra. 'I can bear our lot; but I want no strangers to be introduced to share its bitterness, and soothe us with their sympathy.'

'You speak like a girl,' said Mr. Ferrars, 'and a headstrong girl, which you always have been. You know not what you are talking about. It is a matter of life or death. Your decorous marriage would have saved us from absolute ruin.'

'Alone, I can meet absolute ruin,' said Myra. 'I have long contemplated such a contingency, and am prepared for it. My marriage with Nigel could hardly save you, sir, from such a visitation, if it be impending. But I trust in that respect, if in no other, you have used a little of the language of exaggeration. I have never received, and I have never presumed to seek, any knowledge of your affairs; but I have assumed, that for your life, somehow or other, you would be permitted to exist without disgrace. If I survive you, I have neither care nor fear.'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the following spring a vexatious incident occurred in Warwick Street. The highly-considered county member, who was the yearly tenant of Mr. Rodney's first floor, and had been always a valuable patron, suddenly died. An adjourned debate, a tough beefsteak, a select committee still harder, and an influenza caught at three o'clock in the morning in an imprudent but irresistible walk home with a confidential Lord of the Treasury, had combined very sensibly to affect the income of Mr. Rodney. At first he was sanguine that such a desirable dwelling would soon find a suitable inhabitant, especially as Mr.

Waldershare assured him that he would mention the matter to all his friends. But time rolled on, and the rooms were still vacant; and the fastidious Rodneys, who at first would only listen to a yearly tenant, began to reduce their expectations. Matters had arrived at such a pass in May, that, for the first time in their experience, they actually condescended to hoist an announcement of furnished apartments.

In this state of affairs a cab rattled up to the house one morning, out of which a young gentleman jumped briskly, and, knocking at the door, asked, of the servant who opened it, whether he might see the apartments. He was a young man, apparently not more than one or two and twenty, of a graceful figure, somewhat above the middle height, fair, with a countenance not absolutely regular, but calm and high-bred. His dress was in the best taste, but to a practised eye had something of a foreign cut, and he wore a slight moustache.

'The rooms will suit me,' he said, 'and I have no doubt the price you ask for them is a just one;' and he bowed with high-bred courtesy to Sylvia, who was now in attendance on him, and who stood with her pretty hands in the pretty pockets of her pretty apron.

'I am glad to hear that,' said Sylvia. 'We have never let them before, except to a yearly tenant.'

'And if we suit each other,' said the gentleman, 'I should have no great objection to become such.'

'In these matters,' said Sylvia, after a little hesitation, 'we give and receive references. Mr. Rodney is well known in this neighbourhood and in Westminster generally; but I dare say,' she adroitly added, 'he has many acquaintances known to you, sir.'

'Not very likely,' replied the young gentleman; 'for I am a foreigner, and only arrived in England this morning;' though he spoke English without the slightest accent.

Sylvia looked a little perplexed; but he continued: 'It is quite just that you should be assured to whom you are letting your lodgings. The only reference I can give you is to my banker, but he is almost too great a man for such matters. Perhaps,' he added, pulling out a case from his breast pocket,

and taking out of it a note, which he handed to Sylvia, 'this may assure you that your rent will be paid.'

Sylvia took a rapid glance at the hundred-pound-note, and twisting it into her little pocket with apparent *sangfroid*, though she held it with a tight grasp, murmured that it was quite unnecessary, and then offered to give her new lodger an acknowledgment of it.

'That is really unnecessary,' he replied. 'Your appearance commands from me that entire confidence which on your part you very properly refuse to a stranger and a foreigner like myself.'

'What a charming young man!' thought Sylvia, pressing with emotion her hundred-pound-note.

'Now,' continued the young gentleman, 'I will return to the station to release my servant, who is a prisoner there with my luggage. Be pleased to make him at home. I shall myself not return probably till the evening; and in the meantime,' he added, giving Sylvia his card, 'you will admit anything that arrives here addressed to Colonel Albert.'

The settlement of Colonel Albert in Warwick Street was an event of no slight importance. It superseded for a time all other topics of conversation, and was discussed at length in the evenings, especially with Mr. Vigo. Who was he? And in what service was he colonel? Mr. Rodney, like a man of the world, assumed that all necessary information would in time be obtained from the colonel's servant; but even men of the world sometimes miscalculate. The servant, who was a Belgian, had only been engaged by the colonel at Brussels a few days before his departure for England, and absolutely knew nothing of his master, except that he was a gentleman with plenty of money and sufficient luggage. Sylvia, who was the only person who had seen the colonel, was strongly in his favour. Mr. Rodney looked doubtful, and avoided any definite opinion until he had had the advantage of an interview with his new lodger. But this was not easy to obtain. Colonel Albert had no wish to see the master of the house, and, if he ever had that desire, his servant would accordingly communicate it in the proper quarter. At present he was satisfied with all the arrangements, and

wished neither to make nor to receive remarks. The habits of the new lodger were somewhat of a recluse. He was generally engaged in his rooms the whole day, and seldom left them till the evening, and nobody, as yet, had called upon him. Under these circumstances, Imogene was instructed to open the matter to Mr. Waldershare when she presided over his breakfast-table; and that gentleman said he would make inquiries about the colonel at the Travellers' Club, where Waldershare passed a great deal of his time. 'If he be anybody,' said Mr. Waldershare, 'he is sure in time to be known there, for he will be introduced as a visitor.' At present, however, it turned out that the 'Travellers'' knew nothing of Colonel Albert; and time went on, and Colonel Albert was not introduced as a visitor there.

After a little while there was a change in the habits of the colonel. One morning, about noon, a groom, extremely well appointed, and having under his charge a couple of steeds of breed and beauty, called at Warwick Street, and the colonel rode out, and was long absent, and after that, every day, and generally at the same hour, mounted his horse. Mr. Rodney was never wearied of catching a glimpse of his distinguished lodger over the blinds of the ground-floor room, and of admiring the colonel's commanding presence in his saddle, distinguished as his seat was alike by its grace and vigour.

In the course of a little time, another incident connected with the colonel occurred which attracted notice and excited interest. Towards the evening a brougham, marked, but quietly, with a foreign coronet, stopped frequently at Mr. Rodney's house, and a visitor to the colonel appeared in the form of a middle-aged gentleman who never gave his name, and evaded, it seemed with practised dexterity, every effort, however adroit, to obtain it. The valet was tried on this head also, and replied with simplicity that he did not know the gentleman's name, but he was always called the Baron.

In the middle of June a packet arrived one day by the coach, from the rector of Hurstley, addressed to Endymion, announcing his father's dangerous illness, and requesting him instantly to repair home. Myra was too much occupied to write even a line.

CHAPTER XXIX.

It was strange that Myra did not write, were it only a line. It was so unlike her. How often this occurred to Endymion during his wearisome and anxious travel! When the coach reached Hurstley, he found Mr. Penruddock waiting for him. Before he could inquire after his father, that gentleman said, 'Myra is at the rectory; you are to come on there.'

'And my father?'——

'Matters are critical,' said Mr. Penruddock, as it were avoiding a direct answer, and hastening his pace.

It was literally not a five minutes' walk from the village inn to the rectory, and they walked in silence. The rector took Endymion at once into his study; for we can hardly call it a library, though some shelves of books were there, and many stuffed birds.

The rector closed the door with care, and looked distressed; and, beckoning to Endymion to be seated, he said, while still standing and half turning away his head, 'My dear boy, prepare yourself for the worst.'

'Ah! he is gone then! my dear, dear father!' and Endymion burst into passionate tears, and leant on the table, his face hid in his hands.

The rector walked up and down the room with an agitated countenance. He could not deny, it would seem, the inference of Endymion; and yet he did not proffer those consolations which might be urged, and which it became one in his capacity peculiarly to urge.

'I must see Myra,' said Endymion eagerly, looking up with a wild air and streaming eyes.

'Not yet,' said the rector; 'she is much disturbed. Your poor father is no more; it is too true; but,' and here the rector hesitated, 'he did not die happily.'

'What do you mean?' said Endymion.

'Your poor father had much to try him,' said the rector. 'His life, since he was amongst us here, was a life, for him, of adversity—perhaps of great adversity—yet he bore up against

it with a Christian spirit; he never repined. There was much that was noble and exalted in his character. But he never overcame the loss of your dear mother. He was never himself afterwards. He was not always master of himself. I could bear witness to that,' said the rector, talking, as it were, to himself. 'Yes; I could conscientiously give evidence to that effect'——

'What effect?' asked Endymion, with a painful scrutiny.

'I could show,' said the rector, speaking slowly, and in a low voice, 'and others could show, that he was not master of himself when he committed the rash act.'

'O Mr. Penruddock!' exclaimed Endymion, starting from his chair, and seizing the rector by his arm. 'What is all this?'

'That a great sorrow has come upon you, and your sister, and all of us,' said Mr. Penruddock; 'and you, and she, and all of us must bow before the Divine will in trembling, though in hope. Your father's death was not natural.'

Such was the end of William Pitt Ferrars, on whom nature, opportunity, and culture appeared to have showered every advantage. His abilities were considerable, his ambition greater. Though intensely worldly, he was not devoid of affections. He found refuge in suicide, as many do, from want of imagination. The present was too hard for him, and his future was only a chaotic nebula.

Endymion did not see his sister that evening. She was not made aware of his arrival, and was alone with Mrs. Penruddock, who never left her night or day. The rector took charge of her brother, and had a sofa-bed made for him in the kind man's room. He was never to be alone. Never the whole night did poor Endymion close his eyes; and he was almost as much agitated about the impending interview with Myra, as about the dark event of terror that had been disclosed to him.

Yet that dreaded interview must take place; and, about noon, the rector told him that Myra was in the drawing-room alone, and would receive him. He tottered as he crossed the hall; grief and physical exhaustion had unmanned him; his eyes were streaming with tears; he paused for a moment with his hand upon the door; he dreaded the anguish of her countenance.

She advanced and embraced him with tenderness; her face was grave, but not a tear even glistened.

'I have been living in a tragedy for years,' said Myra, in a low, hollow voice; 'and the catastrophe has now arrived.'

'Oh, my dear father!' exclaimed Endymion; and he burst into a renewed paroxysm of grief.

'Yes; he was dear to us, and we were dear to him,' said Myra; 'but the curtain has fallen. We have to exert ourselves. Energy and self-control were never more necessary to two human beings than to us. Here are his keys; his papers must be examined by no one but ourselves. There is a terrible ceremony taking place, or impending. When it is all over, we must visit the hall at least once more.'

The whole neighbourhood was full of sorrow for the event, and of sympathy for those bereft. It was universally agreed that Mr. Ferrars had never recovered the death of his wife; had never been the same man after it; had become distrait, absent, wandering in his mind, and the victim of an invincible melancholy. Several instances were given of his inability to manage his affairs. The jury, with Farmer Thornberry for foreman, hesitated not in giving a becoming verdict. In those days information travelled slowly. There were no railroads then, and no telegraphs, and not many clubs. A week elapsed before the sad occurrence was chronicled in a provincial paper, and another week before the report was reproduced in London, and then in an obscure corner of the journal, and in small print. Everything gets about at last, and the world began to stare and talk; but it passed unnoticed to the sufferers, except by a letter from Zenobia, received at Hurstley after Myra had departed from her kind friends. Zenobia was shocked, nay, overwhelmed, by what she had heard; wanted to know if she could be of use; offered to do anything; begged Myra to come and stay with her in St. James' Square; and assured her that, if that were not convenient, when her mourning was over Zenobia would present her at court, just the same as if she were her own daughter.

When the fatal keys were used, and the papers of Mr. Ferrars examined, it turned out worse than even Myra, in her darkest prescience, had anticipated. Her father had died absolutely

penniless. As executor of his father, the funds settled on his wife had remained under his sole control, and they had entirely disappeared. There was a letter addressed to Myra on this subject. She read it with a pale face, said nothing, and, without showing it to Endymion, destroyed it. There was to be an immediate sale of their effects at the hall. It was calculated that the expenses of the funeral and all the country bills might be defrayed by its proceeds.

'And there will be enough left for me,' said Myra. 'I only want ten pounds; for I have ascertained that there is no part of England where ten pounds will not take me.'

Endymion sighed and nearly wept when she said these things. 'No,' he would add; 'we must never part.'

'That would ensure our common ruin,' said Myra. 'No; I will never embarrass you with a sister. You can only just subsist; for you could not well live in a garret, except at the Rodneys'. I see my way,' said Myra; 'I have long meditated over this—I can draw, I can sing, I can speak many tongues: I ought to be able to get food and clothing; I may get something more. And I shall always be content; for I shall always be thinking of you. However humble even my lot, if my will is concentrated on one purpose, it must ultimately effect it. That is my creed,' she said, 'and I hold it fervently. I will stay with these dear people for a little while. They are not exactly the family on which I ought to trespass. But never mind. You will be a great man some day, Endymion, and you will remember the good Penruddocks.'

CHAPTER XXX.

One of the most remarkable families that have ever flourished in England were the Neuchatels. Their founder was a Swiss, who had established a banking house of high repute in England in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and, irrespective of a powerful domestic connection, had in time pretty well engrossed the largest and best portion of foreign banking business. When the great French Revolution occurred, all the emigrants deposited

their jewels and their treasure with the Neuchatels. As the disturbances spread, their example was followed by the alarmed proprietors and capitalists of the rest of Europe; and, independently of their own considerable means, the Neuchatels thus had the command for a quarter of a century, more or less, of adventitious millions. They were scrupulous and faithful stewards; but they were doubtless repaid for their vigilance, their anxiety, and often their risk, by the opportunities which these rare resources permitted them to enjoy. One of the Neuchatels was a favourite of Mr. Pitt, and assisted the great statesman in his vast financial arrangements. This Neuchatel was a man of large capacity, and thoroughly understood his period. The minister wished to introduce him to public life, would have opened Parliament to him, and no doubt have showered on him honours and titles. But Neuchatel declined these overtures. He was one of those strong minds who will concentrate their energies on one object; without personal vanity, but with a deep-seated pride in the future. He was always preparing for his posterity. Governed by this passion, although he himself would have been content to live for ever in Bishopsgate Street, where he was born, he had become possessed of a vast principality, and which, strange to say, with every advantage of splendour and natural beauty, was not an hour's drive from Whitechapel.

Hainault House had been raised by a British peer in the days when nobles were fond of building Palladian palaces. It was a chief work of Sir William Chambers, and in its style, its beauty, and almost in its dimensions, was a rival of Stowe or Wanstead. It stood in a deer park, and was surrounded by a royal forest. The family that had raised it wore out in the earlier part of this century. It was supposed that the place must be destroyed and dismantled. It was too vast for a citizen, and the locality was no longer sufficiently refined for a conscript father. In this dilemma, Neuchatel stepped in and purchased the whole affair—palace, and park, and deer, and pictures, and halls, and galleries of statue and bust, and furniture, and even wines, and all the farms that remained, and all the seigneurial rights in the royal forest. But he never lived there. Though

he spared nothing in the maintenance and the improvement of the domain, except on a Sunday he never visited it, and was never known to sleep under its roof. 'It will be ready for those who come after me,' he would remark, with a modest smile.

Those who came after him were two sons, between whom his millions were divided; and Adrian, the eldest, in addition to his share, was made the lord of Hainault. Adrian had inherited something more, and something more precious, than his father's treasure—a not inferior capacity, united, in his case, with much culture, and with a worldly ambition to which his father was a stranger. So long as that father lived, Adrian had been extremely circumspect. He seemed only devoted to business, and to model his conduct on that of his eminent sire. That father who had recognised with pride and satisfaction his capacity, and who was without jealousy, had initiated his son during his lifetime in all the secrets of his wondrous craft, and had entrusted him with a leading part in their affairs. Adrian had waited in Downing Street on Lord Liverpool, as his father years before had waited on Mr. Pitt.

The elder Neuchatel departed this life a little before the second French Revolution of 1830, which had been so fatal to Mr. Ferrars. Adrian, who had never committed himself in politics, further than sitting a short time for a reputed Tory borough, for which he paid a rent of a thousand a year to the proprietor, but who was known to have been nurtured in the school of Pitt and Wellington, astonished the world by voting for Lord Grey's Reform Bill, and announcing himself as a Liberal. This was a large fish for the new Liberal Treasury to capture; their triumph was great, and they determined to show that they appreciated the power and the influence of their new ally. At the dissolution of 1831, Adrian Neuchatel was a candidate for a popular constituency, and was elected at the head of the poll. His brother, Melchior, was also returned, and a nephew. The Liberals were alarmed by a subscription of fabulous dimensions said to have been collected by the Tories to influence the General Election; and the undoubted contribution of a noble duke was particularly mentioned, which alone appalled the heart of Brooks'. The matter was put before Neuchatel, as he entered

the club, to which he had been recently elected with acclamation. 'So you are a little frightened,' he said, with a peculiarly witching smile which he had, half mockery and half good nature; as much as to say, 'I will do what you wish, but I see through you and everybody else.' 'So you are a little frightened. Well; we City men must see what we can do against the dukes. You may put me down for double his amount.'

Adrian purchased a very fine mansion in Portland Place, and took up his residence formally at Hainault. He delighted in the place, and to dwell there in a manner becoming the scene had always been one of his dreams. Now he lived there with unbounded expenditure. He was passionately fond of horses, and even in his father's lifetime had run some at Newmarket in another name. The stables at Hainault had been modelled on those at Chantilly, and were almost as splendid a pile as the mansion itself. They were soon full, and of first-rate animals in their different ways. With his choice teams Adrian could reach Bishopsgate from Hainault, particularly if there were no stoppages in Whitechapel, in much under an hour.

If he had fifty persons in his stables, there were certainly as many in his park and gardens. These latter were most elaborate. It seemed there was nothing that Hainault could not produce: all the fruits and flowers of the tropics. The conservatories and forcing-houses looked, in the distance, like a city of glass. But, after all, the portion of this immense establishment which was most renowned, and perhaps, on the whole, best appreciated, was the establishment of the kitchen. The chief was the greatest celebrity of Europe; and he had no limit to his staff, which he had selected with the utmost scrutiny, maintained with becoming spirit, and winnowed with unceasing vigilance. Every day at Hainault was a banquet. What delighted Adrian was to bring down without notice a troop of friends, conscious they would be received as well as if there had been a preparation of weeks. Sometimes it was a body from the Stock Exchange, sometimes a host from the House of Commons, sometimes a board of directors with whom he had been transacting business in the morning. It delighted Adrian to see them quaffing his burgundy, and stuffing down his truffles, and his choice pies from Strasbourg,

and all the delicate dishes which many of them looked at with wonder, and tasted with timidity. And then he would, with his particular smile, say to a brother bank director, whose mouth was full, and who could only answer him with his eyes, 'Business gives one an appetite; eh, Mr. Trodgits?'

Sunday was always a great day at Hainault. The Royal and the Stock Exchanges were both of them always fully represented; and then they often had an opportunity, which they highly appreciated, of seeing and conferring with some public characters, M.P.s of note or promise, and occasionally a secretary of the Treasury, or a privy councillor. 'Turtle makes all men equal,' Adrian would observe. 'Our friend Trodgits seemed a little embarrassed at first, when I introduced him to the Right Honourable; but when they sate next each other at dinner, they soon got on very well.'

On Sunday the guests walked about and amused themselves. No one was allowed to ride or drive; Mrs. Neuchatel did not like riding and driving on Sundays. 'I see no harm in it,' said Adrian, 'but I like women to have their way about religion. And you may go to the stables and see the horses, and that might take up the morning. And then there are the houses; they will amuse you. For my part, I am for a stroll in the forest;' and then he would lead his companions, after a delightful ramble, to some spot of agrestic charm, and, looking at it with delight, would say, 'Pretty, is not it? But then they say this place is not fashionable. It will do, I think, for us City men.'

Adrian had married, when very young, a lady selected by his father. The selection seemed a good one. She was the daughter of a most eminent banker, and had herself, though that was of slight importance, a large portion. She was a woman of abilities, highly cultivated. Nothing had ever been spared that she should possess every possible accomplishment, and acquire every information and grace that it was desirable to attain. She was a linguist, a fine musician, no mean artist; and she threw out, if she willed it, the treasures of her well-stored and not unimaginative mind with ease and sometimes eloquence. Her person, without being absolutely beautiful, was interesting. There was even a degree of fascination in her brown velvet eyes. And yet

Mrs. Neuchatel was not a contented spirit; and though she appreciated the great qualities of her husband, and viewed him even with reverence as well as affection, she scarcely contributed to his happiness as much as became her. And for this reason. Whether it were the result of physical organisation, or whether it were the satiety which was the consequence of having been born, and bred, and lived for ever, in a society in which wealth was the prime object of existence, and practically the test of excellence, Mrs. Neuchatel had imbibed not merely a contempt for money, but absolutely a hatred of it. The prosperity of her house depressed her. The stables with their fifty grooms, and the grounds with their fifty gardeners, and the daily visit of the head cook to pass the bill of fare, were incidents and circumstances that made her melancholy. She looked upon the Stock Exchange coming down to dinner as she would on an invasion of the Visigoths, and endured the stiff observations or the cumbrous liveliness of the merchants and bank directors with gloomy grace. Something less material might be anticipated from the members of Parliament. But whether they thought it would please the genius of the place, or whether Adrian selected his friends from those who sympathised with his pursuits, the members of Parliament seemed wonderfully to accord with the general tone of the conversation, or varied it only by indulging in technical talk of their own. Sometimes she would make a desperate effort to change the elements of their society; something in this way: 'I see M. Arago and M. Mignet have arrived here, Adrian. Do not you think we ought to invite them here? And then you might ask Mr. Macaulay to meet them. You said you wished to ask Mr. Macaulay.'

In one respect the alliance between Adrian and his wife was not an unfortunate one. A woman, and a woman of abilities, fastidious, and inclined to be querulous, might safely be counted on as, in general, ensuring for both parties in their union an unsatisfactory and unhappy life. But Adrian, though kind, generous, and indulgent, was so absorbed by his own great affairs, was a man at the same time of so serene a temper and so supreme a will, that the over-refined fantasies of his wife produced not the slightest effect on the course of his life. Adrian

Neuchatel was what very few people are—master in his own house. With a rich varnish of graciousness and favour, he never swerved from his purpose; and, though willing to effect all things by smiles and sweet temper, he had none of that morbid sensibility which allows some men to fret over a phrase, to be tortured by a sigh, or to be subdued by a tear.

There had been born of this marriage only one child, the greatest heiress in England. She had been christened after her father, ADRIANA. She was now about seventeen; and, had she not been endowed with the finest disposition and the sweetest temper in the world, she must have been spoiled, for both her parents idolised her. To see her every day was for Adrian a reward for all his labours, and in the midst of his greatest affairs he would always snatch a moment to think how he could contribute to her pleasure or her happiness. All that was rare and delightful and beautiful in the world was at her command. There was no limit to the gratification of her wishes. But, alas! this favoured maiden wished for nothing. Her books interested her, and a beautiful nature; but she liked to be alone, or with her mother. She was impressed with the horrible and humiliating conviction, that she was courted and admired only for her wealth.

'What my daughter requires,' said Adrian, as he mused over these domestic contrarieties, 'is a companion of her own age. Her mother is the very worst constant companion she could have. She requires somebody with charm, and yet of a commanding mind; with youthful sympathy, and yet influencing her in the right way. It must be a person of birth and breeding and complete self-respect. I do not want to have any parasites in my house, or affected fine ladies. That would do no good. What I do want is a thing very difficult to procure. And yet they say everything is to be obtained. At least, I have always thought so, and found it so. I have the greatest opinion of an advertisement in the 'Times.' I got some of my best clerks by advertisements in the 'Times.' If I had consulted friends, there would have been no end of jobbing for such patronage. One could not trust, in such matters, one's own brother. I will draw up an advertisement and insert it in the 'Times,' and have the references to my counting-house. I will

think over the wording as I drive to town.' This was the wording:—

ADVERTISEMENT.

A BANKER and his Wife require a Companion for their only child, a young lady whose accomplishments and acquirements are already considerable. The friend that they would wish for her must be of about the same age as herself, and in every other respect their lots will be the same. The person thus desired will be received and treated as a daughter of the house, will be allowed her own suite of apartments, her own servants and equipage. She must be a person of birth, breeding, and entire self-respect; with a mind and experience capable of directing conduct, and with manners which will engage sympathy.—Apply to H. H., 45 Bishopsgate Street Within.

This advertisement met the eye of Myra at Hurstley Rectory about a month after her father's death, and she resolved to answer it. Her reply pleased Mr. Neuchatel. He selected it out of hundreds, and placed himself in communication with Mr. Penruddock. The result was, that Miss Ferrars was to pay a visit to the Neuchatels; and if, on experience, they liked each other, the engagement was to take place.

In the meantime the good rector of Hurstley arrived on the previous evening with his precious charge at Hainault House; and was rewarded for his kind exertions, not only by the prospect of assisting Myra, but by some present experience of a splendid and unusual scene.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'WHAT do you think of her, mamma?' said Adriana, with glistening eyes, as she ran into Mrs. Neuchatel's dressing-room for a moment before dinner.

'I think her manners are perfect,' replied Mrs. Neuchatel; 'and as there can be no doubt, after all we have heard, of her principles, I think we are most fortunate. But what do you think of her, Adriana? For, after all, that is the main question.'

'I think she is divine,' said Adriana; 'but I fear she has no heart.'

'And why? Surely it is early to decide on such a matter as that!'

'When I took her to her room,' said Adriana, 'I suppose I was nervous; but I burst into tears, and threw my arms round her neck and embraced her, but she did not respond. She touched my forehead with her lips, and withdrew from my embrace.'

'She wished, perhaps, to teach you to control your emotions,' said Mrs. Neuchatel. 'You have known her only an hour, and you could not have done more to your own mother.'

It had been arranged that there should be no visitors to-day; only a nephew and a foreign consul-general, just to break the formality of the meeting. Mr. Neuchatel placed Myra next to himself at the round table, and treated her with marked consideration—cordial but courteous, and easy, with a certain degree of deference. His wife, who piqued herself on her perception of character, threw her brown velvet eyes on her neighbour, Mr. Penruddock, and cross-examined him in mystical whispers. She soon recognised his love of nature; and this allowed her to dissert on the subject, at once sublime and inexhaustible, with copiousness worthy of the theme. When she found he was an entomologist, and that it was not so much mountains as insects which interested him, she shifted her ground, but treated it with equal felicity. Strange, but nature is never so powerful as in insect life. The white ant can destroy fleets and cities, and the locusts erase a province. And then, how beneficent they are! Man would find it difficult to rival their exploits: the bee, that gives us honey; the worm, that gives us silk; the cochineal, that supplies our manufactures with their most brilliant dye.

Mr. Penruddock did not seem to know much about manufactures, but always recommended his cottagers to keep bees.

'The lime-tree abounds in our village, and there is nothing the bees love more than its blossoms.'

This direct reference to his village led Mrs. Neuchatel to an inquiry as to the state of the poor about Hurstley, and she made the inquiry in a tone of commiseration.

'Oh! we do pretty well,' said Mr. Penruddock.

'But how can a family live on ten or twelve shillings a week?' murmured Mrs. Neuchatel.

'There it is,' said Mr. Penruddock. 'A family has more than that. With a family the income proportionately increases.'

Mrs. Neuchatel sighed. 'I must say,' she said, 'I cannot help feeling there is something wrong in our present arrangements. When I sit down to dinner every day, with all these dishes, and remember that there are millions who never taste meat, I cannot resist the conviction that it would be better if there were some equal division, and all should have, if not much, at least something.'

'Nonsense, Emily!' said Mr. Neuchatel, who had an organ like Fine-ear, and could catch, when necessary, his wife's most mystical revelations. 'My wife, Mr. Penruddock, is a regular Communist. I hope you are not,' he added, with a smile, turning to Myra.

'I think life would be very insipid,' replied Myra, 'if all our lots were the same.'

When the ladies withdrew, Adriana and Myra walked out together hand-in-hand. Mr. Neuchatel rose and sate next to Mr. Penruddock, and began to talk politics. His reverend guest could not conceal his alarm about the position of the Church, and spoke of Lord John Russell's appropriation clause with well-bred horror.

'Well, I do not think there is much to be afraid of,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'This is a liberal age, and you cannot go against it. The people must be educated, and where are the funds to come from? We must all do something, and the Church must contribute its share. You know I am a Liberal, but I am not for any rash courses. I am not at all sorry that Sir Robert Peel gained so much at the last general election. I like parties to be balanced. I am quite content with affairs. My friends, the Liberals, are in office, and, being there, they can do very little. That is the state of things, is it not, Melchior?' he added, with a smile to his nephew, who was an M.P. 'A balanced state of parties, and the house of Neuchatel with three votes—that will do. We poor City men get a little attention paid to us now,

but before the dissolution three votes went for nothing. Now, shall we go and ask my daughter to give us a song?'

Mrs. Neuchatel accompanied her daughter on the piano, and after a time not merely on the instrument. The organ of both was fine and richly cultivated. It was choice chamber music. Mr. Neuchatel seated himself by Myra. His tone was more than kind, and his manner gentle. 'It is a little awkward the first day,' he said, 'among strangers, but that will wear off. You must bring your mind to feel that this is your home, and we shall all of us do everything in our power to convince you of it. Mr. Penruddock mentioned to me your wish, under present circumstances, to enter as little as possible into society, and this is a very social house. Your feeling is natural, and you will be in this matter entirely your own mistress. We shall always be glad to see you, but if you are not present we shall know and respect the cause. For my own part, I am one of those who would rather cherish affection than indulge grief, but every one must follow their mood. I hear you have a brother, to whom you are much attached; a twin, too, and they tell me strongly resembling you. He is in a public office, I believe? Now, understand this; your brother can come here whenever he likes, without any further invitation. Ask him whenever you please. We shall always be glad to see him. No sort of notice is necessary. This is not a very small house, and we can always manage to find a bed and a cutlet for a friend.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

Nothing could be more successful than the connection formed between the Neuchatel family and Myra Ferrars. Both parties to the compact were alike satisfied. Myra had 'got out of that hole' which she always hated; and though the new life she had entered was not exactly the one she had mused over, and which was founded on the tradition of her early experience, it was a life of energy and excitement, of splendour and power, with a total absence of petty vexations and miseries, affording neither time nor cause for the wearing chagrin of a monotonous and

mediocre existence. But the crowning joy of her emancipation was the prospect it offered of frequent enjoyment of the society of her brother.

With regard to the Neuchatels, they found in Myra everything they could desire. Mrs. Neuchatel was delighted with a companion who was not the daughter of a banker, and whose schooled intellect not only comprehended all her doctrines, however abstruse or fanciful, but who did not hesitate, if necessary, to controvert or even confute them. As for Adriana, she literally idolised a friend whose proud spirit and clear intelligence were calculated to exercise a strong but salutary influence over her timid and sensitive nature. As for the great banker himself, who really had that faculty of reading character which his wife flattered herself she possessed, he had made up his mind about Myra from the first, both from her correspondence and her conversation. 'She has more common sense than any woman I ever knew, and more,' he would add, 'than most men. If she were not so handsome, people would find it out; but they cannot understand that so beautiful a woman can have a headpiece, that, I really believe, could manage the affairs in Bishopsgate Street.'

In the meantime life at Hainault resumed its usual course; streams of guests, of all parties, colours, and classes, and even nations. Sometimes Mr. Neuchatel would say, 'I really must have a quiet day that Miss Ferrars may dine with us, and she shall ask her brother. How glad I shall be when she goes into half-mourning! I scarcely catch a glimpse of her.' And all this time his wife and daughter did nothing but quote her, which was still more irritating, for, as he would say, half-grumbling and half-smiling, 'If it had not been for me she would not have been here.'

At first Adriana would not dine at table without Myra, and insisted on sharing her imprisonment. 'It does not look like a cell,' said Myra, surveying, not without complacency, her beautiful little chamber, beautifully lit, with its silken hangings and carved ceiling and bright with books and pictures; 'besides, there is no reason why you should be a prisoner. You have not lost a father, and I hope never will.'

'Amen!' said Adriana; 'that would indeed be the unhappiest day of my life.'

'You cannot be in society too much in the latter part of the day,' said Myra. 'The mornings should be sacred to ourselves, but for the rest of the hours people are to see and to be seen, and,' she added, 'to like and to be liked.'

Adriana shook her head; 'I do not wish any one to like me but you.'

'I am sure I shall always like you, and love you,' said Myra, 'but I am equally sure that a great many other people will do the same.'

'It will not be myself that they like or love,' said Adriana with a sigh.

'Now, spare me that vein, dear Adriana; you know I do not like it. It is not agreeable, and I do not think it is true. I believe that women are loved much more for themselves than is supposed. Besides, a woman should be content if she is loved; that is the point; and she is not to inquire how far the accidents of life have contributed to the result. Why should you not be loved for yourself? You have an interesting appearance. I think you very pretty. You have choice accomplishments and agreeable conversation and the sweetest temper in the world. You want a little self-conceit, my dear. If I were you and admired, I should never think of my fortune.'

'If you were the greatest heiress in the world, Myra, and were married, nobody would suppose for a moment that it was for your fortune.'

'Go down to dinner and smile upon everybody, and tell me about your conquests to-morrow. And say to your dear papa, that as he is so kind as to wish to see me, I will join them after dinner.'

And so, for the first two months, she occasionally appeared in the evening, especially when there was no formal party. Endymion came and visited her every Sunday, but he was also a social recluse, and though he had been presented to Mrs. Neuchatel and her daughter, and been most cordially received by them, it was some considerable time before he made the acquaintance of the great banker.

About September Myra may be said to have formally joined the circle at Hainault. Three months had elapsed since the terrible event, and she felt, irrespective of other considerations, her position hardly justified her, notwithstanding all the indulgent kindness of the family, in continuing a course of life which she was conscious to them was sometimes an inconvenience and always a disappointment. It was impossible to deny that she was interested and amused by the world which she now witnessed—so energetic, so restless, so various; so full of urgent and pressing life; never thinking of the past and quite heedless of the future, but worshipping an almighty present that sometimes seemed to roll on like the car of Juggernaut. She was much diverted by the gentlemen of the Stock Exchange, so acute, so audacious, and differing so much from the merchants in the style even of their dress, and in the ease, perhaps the too great facility, of their bearing. They called each other by their Christian names, and there were allusions to practical jokes which intimated a life something between a public school and a garrison. On more solemn days there were diplomatists and men in political office; sometimes great musical artists, and occasionally a French actor. But the dinners were always the same; dishes worthy of the great days of the Bourbons, and wines of rarity and price, which could not ruin Neuchatel, for in many instances the vineyards belonged to himself.

One morning at breakfast, when he rarely encountered them, but it was a holiday in the City, Mr. Neuchatel said, 'There are a few gentlemen coming to dine here to-day whom you know, with one exception. He is a young man, a very nice young fellow. I have seen a good deal of him of late on business in the City, and have taken a fancy to him. He is a foreigner, but he was partly educated in this country and speaks English as well as any of us.'

'Then I suppose he is not a Frenchman,' said Mrs. Neuchatel, 'for they never speak English.'

'I shall not say what he is. You must all find out; I dare say Miss Ferrars will discover him; but, remember, you must all of you pay him great attention, for he is not a common person, I can assure you.'

'You are mysterious, Adrian,' said his wife, 'and quite pique our curiosity.'

'Well, I wish somebody would pique mine,' said the banker. 'These holidays in the City are terrible things. I think I will go after breakfast and look at the new house, and I dare say Miss Ferrars will be kind enough to be my companion.'

Several of the visitors, fortunately for the banker whose time hung rather heavily on his hands, arrived an hour or so before dinner, that they might air themselves in the famous gardens and see some of the new plants. But the guest whom he most wished to greet, and whom the ladies were most curious to welcome, did not arrive. They had all entered the house and the critical moment was at hand, when, just as dinner was about to be announced, the servants ushered in a young man of distinguished appearance, and the banker exclaimed, 'You have arrived just in time to take Mrs. Neuchatel in to dinner,' and he presented to her—Colonel Albert.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The ladies were much interested by Colonel Albert. Mrs. Neuchatel exercised on him all the unrivalled arts by which she so unmistakably discovered character. She threw on him her brown velvet eyes with a subdued yet piercing beam, which would penetrate his most secret and even undeveloped intelligence. She asked questions in a hushed mystical voice, and as the colonel was rather silent and somewhat short in his replies, though ever expressed in a voice of sensibility and with refined deference of manner, Mrs. Neuchatel opened her own peculiar views on a variety of subjects of august interest, such as education, high art, the influence of women in society, the formation of character, and the distribution of wealth, on all of which this highly gifted lady was always in the habit of informing her audience, by way of accompaniment, that she was conscious that the views she entertained were peculiar. The views of Mrs. Neuchatel were peculiar, and therefore not always, or even

easily, comprehended. That indeed she felt was rather her fate in life, but a superior intelligence like hers has a degree of sublimated self-respect which defies destiny.

When she was alone with the ladies, the bulletin of Mrs. Neuchatel was not so copious as had been expected. She announced that Colonel Albert was sentimental, and she suspected a poet. But for the rest she had discovered nothing, not even his nationality. She had tried him both in French and German, but he persisted in talking English, although he spoke of himself as a foreigner. After dinner he conversed chiefly with the men, particularly with the Governor of the Bank, who seemed to interest him much, and a director of one of the dock companies, who offered to show him over their establishment, an offer which Colonel Albert eagerly accepted. Then, as if he remembered that homage was due at such a moment to the fairer sex, he went and seated himself by Adriana, and was playful and agreeable, though when she was cross-examined afterwards by her friends as to the character of his conversation, she really could not recall anything particular except that he was fond of horses, and said that he should like very much to take a ride with her. Just before he took his departure, Colonel Albert addressed Myra, and in a rather strange manner. He said, 'I have been puzzling myself all dinner, but I cannot help feeling that we have met before.'

Myra shook her head and said, 'I think that is impossible.'

'Well,' said the colonel with a look a little perplexed and not altogether satisfied, 'I suppose then it was a dream. May dreams so delightful,' and he bowed, 'never be wanting!'

'So you think he is a poet, Emily,' said Mr. Neuchatel when they had all gone. We have got a good many of his papers in Bishopsgate Street, but I have not met with any verses in them yet.'

The visit of Colonel Albert was soon repeated, and he became a rather frequent guest at Hainault. It was evident that he was a favourite with Mr. Neuchatel. 'He knows very few people,' he would say, 'and I wish him to make some friends. Poor young fellow: he has had rather a hard life of it, and seen some service for such a youth. He is a perfect gentleman, and if he be a poet, Emily, that is all in your way. You like literary

people, and are always begging that I should ask them. Well, next Saturday you will have a sort of a lion—one of the principal writers in "Scaramouch." He is going to Paris as the foreign correspondent of the "Chuck-Farthing" with a thousand a year, and one of my friends in the Stock Exchange, who is his great ally, asked me to give him some letters. So he came to Bishopsgate Street—they all come to Bishopsgate Street—and I asked him to dine here on Saturday. By the by, Miss Ferrars, ask your brother to come on the same day and stay with us till Monday. I will take him up to town with me quite in time for his office.'

This was the first time that Endymion had remained at Hainault. He looked forward to the visit with anticipations of great pleasure. Hainault, and all the people there, and everything about it, delighted him, and most of all the happiness of his sister and the consideration, and generosity, and delicate affection with which she was treated. One morning, to his astonishment, Myra had insisted upon his accepting from her no inconsiderable sum of money. 'It is no part of my salary,' she said, when he talked of her necessities. 'Mr. Neuchatel said he gave it to me for outfit and to buy gloves. But being in mourning I want to buy nothing, and you, dear darling, must have many wants. Besides, Mrs. Neuchatel has made me so many presents that I really do not think that I shall ever want to buy anything again.'

It was rather a grand party at Hainault, such as Endymion had little experience of. There was a cabinet minister and his wife, not only an ambassador, but an ambassadress who had been asked to meet them, a nephew Neuchatel, the M.P. with a pretty young wife, and several apparently single gentlemen of note and position. Endymion was nervous when he entered, and more so because Myra was not in the room. But his trepidation was absorbed in his amazement when in the distance he observed St. Barbe, with a very stiff white cravat, and his hair brushed into unnatural order, and his whole demeanour forming a singular contrast to the rollicking cynicism of Joe's and the office.

Mr. Neuchatel presented St. Barbe to the lady of the mansion. 'Here is one of our great wits,' said the banker, 'and he is going

to Paris, which is the capital of wits.' The critical moment prevented prolonged conversation, but the lady of the mansion did contrive to convey to St. Barbe her admiring familiarity with some of his effusions, and threw out a phrase which proved how finely she could distinguish between wit and humour.

Endymion at dinner sate between two M.P.s, whom his experience at the House of Commons allowed him to recognise. As he was a young man whom neither of them knew, neither of them addressed him, but with delicate breeding carried on an active conversation across him, as if in fact he were not present. As Endymion had very little vanity, this did not at all annoy him. On the contrary, he was amused, for they spoke of matters with which he was not unacquainted, though he looked as if he knew or heard nothing. Their conversation was what is called 'shop:' all about the House and office; criticisms on speakers, speculations as to preferment, what Government would do about this, and how well Government got out of that.

Endymion was amused by seeing Myra, who was remote from him, sitting by St. Barbe, who, warmed by the banquet, was evidently holding forth without the slightest conception that his neighbour whom he addressed had long become familiar with his characteristics.

After dinner, St. Barbe pounced upon Endymion. 'Only think of our meeting here!' he said. 'I wonder why they asked you. You are not going to Paris, and you are not a wit. What a family this is!' he said; 'I had no idea of wealth before! Did you observe the silver plates? I could not hold mine with one hand, it was so heavy. I do not suppose there are such plates in the world. It gives one an idea of the galleons and Anson's plunder. But they deserve their wealth,' he added; 'nobody grudges it to them. I declare when I was eating that truffle, I felt a glow about my heart that, if it were not indigestion, I think must have been gratitude; though that is an article I had not believed in. He is a wonderful man, that Neuchatel. If I had only known him a year ago! I would have dedicated my novel to him. He is a sort of man who would have given you a cheque immediately. He would not have read it, to be sure, but what of that? If you had dedi-

cated it to a lord, the most he would have done would have been to ask you to dinner, and then perhaps cut up your work in one of the Quality reviews, and taken money for doing it out of our pockets! Oh! it's too horrid! There are some topsawyers here to-day, Ferrars! It would make Seymour Hicks' mouth water to be here. We should have had it in the papers, and he would have left us out of the list, and called us, etc. Now I dare say that ambassador has been blundering all his life, and yet there is something in that star and ribbon; I do not know how you feel, but I could almost go down on my knees to him. And there is a cabinet minister; well, we know what he is; I have been squibbing him for these two years, and now that I meet him I feel like a snob. Oh! there is an immense deal of superstition left in the world. I am glad they are going to the ladies. I am to be honoured by some conversation with the mistress of the house. She seems a first-rate woman, familiar with the glorious pages of a certain classic work, and my humble effusions. She praised one she thought I wrote, but between ourselves it was written by that fellow Seymour Hicks, who imitates me; but I would not put her right, as dinner might have been announced every moment. But she is a great woman, sir,—wonderful eyes! They are all great women here. I sat next to one of the daughters, or daughters-in-law, or nieces, I suppose. By Jove! it was tierce and quart. If you had been there, you would have been run through in a moment. I had to show my art. Now they are rising. I should not be surprised if Mr. Neuchatel were to present me to some of the grandees. I believe them to be all impostors, but still it is pleasant to talk to a man with a star.

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of heaven,"

Byron wrote; a silly line; he should have written,

"Ye stars, which are the poetry of dress."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

St. Barbe was not disappointed in his hopes. It was an evening of glorious success for him. He had even the honour of sitting for a time by the side of Mrs. Neuchatel, and being

full of good claret, he, as he phrased it, showed his paces; that is to say, delivered himself of some sarcastic paradoxes duly blended with fulsome flattery. Later in the evening, he contrived to be presented both to the ambassador and the cabinet minister, and treated them as if they were demigods; listened to them as if with an admiration which he vainly endeavoured to repress; never spoke except to enforce and illustrate the views which they had condescended to intimate; successfully conveyed to his excellency that he was conversing with an enthusiast for his exalted profession; and to the minister that he had met an ardent sympathiser with his noble career. The ambassador was not dissatisfied with the impression he had made on one of the foreign correspondents of the 'Chuck-Farthing,' and the minister flattered himself that both the literary and the graphic representations of himself in 'Scaramouch' might possibly for the future be mitigated.

'I have done business to-night,' said St. Barbe to Endymion, towards the close of the evening. 'You did not know I had left the old shop? I kept it close. I could stand it no longer. One has energies, sir, though not recognised—at least not recognised much,' he added thoughtfully. 'But who knows what may happen? The age of mediocrity is not eternal. You see this thing offered, and I saw an opening. It has come already. You saw the big-wigs all talking to me? I shall go to Paris now with some *éclat*. I shall invent a new profession; the literary diplomatist. The bore is, I know nothing about foreign politics. My line has been the other way. Never mind; I will read the "Débats" and the "Revue des Deux Mondes," and make out something. Foreign affairs are all the future, and my views may be as right as anybody else's; probably more correct, not so conventional. What a fool I was, Ferrars! I was asked to remain here to-night and refused! The truth is, I could not stand those powdered gentlemen, and I should have been under their care. They seem so haughty and supercilious. And yet I was wrong. I spoke to one of them very rudely just now, when he was handing coffee, to show I was not afraid, and he answered me like a seraph. I felt remorse.'

'Well, I have made the acquaintance of Mr. St. Barbe,' said

Myra to Endymion. 'Strange as he is, he seemed quite familiar to me, and he was so full of himself that he never found me out. I hope some day to know Mr. Trenchard and Mr. Waldershare. Those I look upon as your chief friends.'

On the following afternoon, Adriana, Myra, and Endymion took a long walk together in the forest. The green glades in the autumnal woods were inviting, and sometimes they stood before the vast form of some doddered oak. The air was fresh and the sun was bright. Adriana was always gay and happy in the company of her adored Myra, and her happiness and her gaiety were not diminished by the presence of Myra's brother. So it was a lively and pleasant walk.

At the end of a long glade they observed a horseman followed by a groom approaching them. Endymion was some little way behind, gathering wild flowers for Adriana. Cantering along, the cavalier soon reached them, and then he suddenly pulled up his horse. It was Colonel Albert.

'You are walking, ladies? Permit me to join you,' and he was by their side. 'I delight in forests and in green alleys,' said Colonel Albert. 'Two wandering nymphs make the scene perfect.'

'We are not alone,' said Adriana, 'but our guardian is picking some wild flowers for us, which we fancied. I think it is time to return. You are going to Hainault, I believe, Colonel Albert, so we can all walk home together.'

So they turned, and Endymion with his graceful offering in a moment met them. Full of his successful quest, he offered with eager triumph the flowers to Adriana, without casting a glance at her new companion.

'Beautiful!' exclaimed Adriana, and she stopped to admire and arrange them. 'See, dear Myra, is not this lovely? How superior to anything in our glass-houses!'

Myra took the flower and examined it. Colonel Albert, who was silent, was watching all this time Endymion with intentness, who now looked up and encountered the gaze of the new comer. Their eyes met, their countenances were agitated, they seemed perplexed, and then it seemed that at the same time both extended their hands.

'It is a long time since we met,' said Colonel Albert, and he retained the hand of Endymion with affection. But Endymion, who was apparently much moved, said nothing, or rather only murmured an echo to the remarks of his new friend. And then they all walked on, but Myra fell a little back and made a signal to Endymion to join her.

'You never told me, darling, that you knew Colonel Albert.'

'Colonel Albert!' said Endymion, looking amazed, and then he added, 'Who is Colonel Albert?'

'That gentleman before us,' said Myra.

'That is the Count of Otranto, whose fag I was at Eton.'

'The Count of Otranto!'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Colonel Albert from this day became an object of increased and deeper interest to Myra. His appearance and manners had always been attractive, and the mystery connected with him was not calculated to diminish curiosity in his conduct or fate. But when she discovered that he was the unseen hero of her childhood, the being who had been kind to her Endymion in what she had ever considered the severest trial of her brother's life, had been his protector from those who would have oppressed him, and had cherished him in the desolate hour of his delicate and tender boyhood, her heart was disturbed. How often had they talked together of the Count of Otranto, and how often had they wondered who he was! His memory had been a delightful mystery to them in their Berkshire solitude, and Myra recalled with a secret smile the numberless and ingenious inquiries by which she had endeavoured to elicit from her brother some clue as to his friend, or to discover some detail which might guide her to a conclusion. Endymion had known nothing, and was clear always that the Count of Otranto must have been, and was, an English boy. And now the Count of Otranto called himself Colonel Albert, and though he persisted in speaking English, had admitted to Mrs. Neuchatel that he was a foreigner.

Who was he? She resolved, when she had an opportunity, to speak to the great banker on the subject.

'Do you know, Mr. Neuchatel,' she said, 'that Endymion, my brother, was at school with Colonel Albert?'

'Ah, ah!' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'But when he was at school he had another name,' said Myra.

'Oh, oh!' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'He was then called the Count of Otranto.'

'That is a very pretty name,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'But why did he change it?' asked Myra.

'The great world often change their names,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'It is only poor City men like myself who are always called Mr., and bear the same name as their fathers.'

'But when a person is called a count when he is a boy, he is seldom called only a colonel when he is a man,' said Myra. 'There is a great mystery in all this.'

'I should not be surprised,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'if he were to change his name again before this time year.'

'Why?' asked Myra.

'Well, when I have read all his papers in Bishopsgate Street, perhaps I shall be able to tell you,' said Mr. Neuchatel, and Myra felt that she could pursue the theme no further.

She expected that Endymion would in time be able to obtain this information, but it was not so. In their first private conversation after their meeting in the forest, Endymion had informed Colonel Albert that, though they had met now for the first time since his return, they had been for some time lodgers in London under the same roof. Colonel Albert smiled when Endymion told him this; then falling into thought, he said: 'I hope we may often meet, but for the moment it may be as well that the past should be known only to ourselves. I wish my life for the present to be as private as I can arrange it. There is no reason why we should not be sometimes together—that is, when you have leisure. I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance at my banker's.'

Parliament had been dissolved through the demise of the crown in the summer of this year (1837), and London society had been prematurely broken up. Waldershare had left town

early in July to secure his election, in which he was successful, with no intention of settling again in his old haunts till the meeting of the new House of Commons, which was to be in November. The Rodneys were away at some Kentish watering-place during August and September, exhibiting to an admiring world their exquisitely made dresses, and enjoying themselves amazingly at balls and assemblies at the public rooms. The resources of private society also were not closed to them. Mr. and Mrs. Gamme were also there and gave immense dinners, and the airy Mrs. Hooghley, who laughed a little at the Gammes' substantial gatherings and herself improvised charming pic-nics. So there was really little embarrassment in the social relations between Colonel Albert and Endymion. They resolved themselves chiefly into arranging joint expeditions to Hainault. Endymion had a perpetual invitation there, and it seemed that the transactions between Mr. Neuchatel and the colonel required much conference, for the banker always expected him, although it was well known that they met not unfrequently in Bishopsgate Street in the course of the week. Colonel Albert and Endymion always stayed at Hainault from Saturday till Monday. It delighted the colonel to mount Endymion on one of his choice steeds, and his former fag enjoyed all this amazingly.

Colonel Albert became domiciled at Hainault. The rooms which were occupied by him when there were always reserved for him. He had a general invitation, and might leave his luggage and books and papers behind him. It was evident that the family pleased him. Between Mr. Neuchatel and himself there were obviously affairs of great interest; but it was equally clear that he liked the female members of the family—all of them; and all liked him. And yet it cannot be said that he was entertaining, but there are some silent people who are more interesting than the best talkers. And when he did speak he always said the right thing. His manners were tender and gentle; he had an unobtrusive sympathy with all they said or did, except, indeed, and that was not rarely, when he was lost in profound abstraction.

'I delight in your friend the colonel, Adrian,' said Mrs. Neuchatel, 'but I must say he is very absent.'

'He has a good deal to think about,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'I wonder what it can be,' thought Myra.

'He has a claim to a great estate,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'and he has to think of the best mode of establishing it; and he has been deprived of great honours, and he believes unjustly, and he wishes to regain them.'

'No wonder, then, he is absent,' said Mrs. Neuchatel. 'If he only knew what a burthen great wealth is, I am sure he would not wish to possess it, and as for honours I never could make out why having a title or a ribbon could make any difference in a human being.'

'Nonsense, my dear Emily,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'Great wealth is a great blessing to a man who knows what to do with it, and as for honours, they are inestimable to the honourable.'

'Well, I ardently hope Colonel Albert may succeed,' said Myra, 'because he was so kind to my brother at Eton. He must have a good heart.'

'They say he is the most unscrupulous of living men,' said Mr. Neuchatel, with his peculiar smile.

'Good heavens!' exclaimed Mrs. Neuchatel.

'How terrible!' said Adriana. 'It cannot be true.'

'Perhaps he is the most determined,' said Myra. 'Moral courage is the rarest of qualities, and often maligned.'

'Well, he has got a champion,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'I ardently wish him success,' said Myra, 'in all his undertakings. I only wish I knew what they were.'

'Has not he told your brother, Miss Ferrars?' asked Mr. Neuchatel, with laughing eyes.

'He never speaks of himself to Endymion,' said Myra.

'He speaks a good deal of himself to me,' said Mr. Neuchatel; 'and he is going to bring a friend here to-morrow who knows more about his affairs even than I do. So you will have a very good opportunity, Miss Ferrars, of making yourself acquainted with them, particularly if you sit next to him at dinner, and are very winning.'

The friend of Colonel Albert was Baron Sergius, the baron who used to visit him in London at twilight in a dark brougham. Mrs. Neuchatel was greatly taken by his appearance, by the

calmness of his mien, his unstudied politeness, and his measured voice. He conversed with her entirely at dinner on German philosophy, of which he seemed a complete master, explained to her the different schools, and probably the successful ones, and imparted to her that precise knowledge which she required on the subject, and which she had otherwise been unable to obtain. It seemed, too, that he personally knew all the famous professors, and he intimated their doctrines not only with profound criticism, but described their persons and habits with vividness and picturesque power, never, however, all this time, by any chance raising his voice, the tones of which were ever distinct and a little precise.

'Is this the first visit of your friend to this country?' asked Myra of Colonel Albert.

'Oh no; he has been here often—and everywhere,' added Colonel Albert.

'Everywhere! he must be a most interesting companion then.'

'I find him so: I never knew any one whom I thought equal to him. But perhaps I am not an impartial judge, for I have known him so long and so intimately. In fact, I have never been out of his sight till I was brought over to this country to be placed at Eton. He is the counsellor of our family, and we all of us have ever agreed that if his advice had been always followed we should never have had a calamity.'

'Indeed, a gifted person! Is he a soldier?'

'No; Baron Sergius has not followed the profession of arms.'

'He looks a diplomatist.'

'Well, he is now nothing but my friend,' said the colonel. 'He might have been anything, but he is a peculiarly domestic character, and is devoted to private life.'

'You are fortunate in such a friend.'

'Well, I am glad to be fortunate in something,' said Colonel Albert.

'And are you not fortunate in everything?'

'I have not that reputation; but I shall be more than fortunate if I have your kind wishes.'

'Those you have,' said Myra, rather eagerly. 'My brother

taught me, even as a child, to wish nothing but good for you. I wish I knew only what I was to wish for.'

'Wish that my plans may succeed,' said Colonel Albert, looking round to her with interest.

'I will more than wish,' said Myra; 'I will believe that they will succeed, because I think you have resolved to succeed.'

'I shall tell Endymion when I see him,' said Colonel Albert, 'that his sister is the only person who has read my character.'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Colonel Albert and Baron Sergius drove up in their landau from Hainault while Endymion was at the door in Warwick Street, returning home. The colonel saluted him cordially, and said, 'The baron is going to take a cup of coffee with me; join us.' So they went upstairs. There was a packet on the table, which seemed to catch the colonel's eye immediately, and he at once opened it with eagerness. It contained many foreign newspapers. Without waiting for the servant who was about to bring candles, the colonel lighted a taper on the table with a lucifer, and then withdrew into the adjoining chamber, opening, however, with folding doors to the principal and spacious apartment.

'A foreign newspaper always interests our friend,' said the baron, taking his coffee.

'Well, it must always be interesting to have news from home, I suppose,' said Endymion.

'Home!' said the baron. 'News is always interesting, whether it come from home or not.'

'To public men,' said Endymion, sipping his coffee.

'To all men if they be wise,' said the baron; 'as a general rule, the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information.'

'But what a rare thing is success in life!' said Endymion. 'I often wonder whether I shall ever be able to step out of the crowd.'

'You may have success in life without stepping out of the crowd,' said the baron.

'A sort of success,' said Endymion; 'I know what you mean. But what I mean is real success in life. I mean, I should like to be a public man.'

'Why?' asked the baron.

'Well, I should like to have power,' said Endymion, blushing.

'The most powerful men are not public men,' said the baron. 'A public man is responsible, and a responsible man is a slave. It is private life that governs the world. You will find this out some day. The world talks much of powerful sovereigns and great ministers; and if being talked about made one powerful, they would be irresistible. But the fact is, the more you are talked about the less powerful you are.'

'But surely King Luitbrand is a powerful monarch; they say he is the wisest of men. And the Emperor Harold, who has succeeded in everything. And as for ministers, who is a great man if it be not Prince Wenceslaus?'

'King Luitbrand is governed by his doctor, who is capable of governing Europe, but has no ambition that way; the Emperor Harold is directed by his mistress, who is a woman of a certain age with a vast sagacity, but who also believes in sorcery; and as for Prince Wenceslaus, he is inspired by an individual as obscure as ourselves, and who, for aught I know, may be, at this moment, like ourselves, drinking a cup of coffee in a hired lodging.'

'What you say about public life amazes me,' said Endymion musingly.

'Think over it,' said the baron. 'As an Englishman, you will have difficulty in avoiding public life. But at any rate do not at present be discontented that you are unknown. It is the first condition of real power. When you have succeeded in life according to your views, and I am inclined to believe you will so succeed, you will, some day, sigh for real power, and denounce the time when you became a public man, and belonged to any one but yourself. But our friend calls me. He has found something startling. I will venture to say, if there be anything in it, it has been brought about by some individual of whom you never heard.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

With the assembling of parliament in November recommenced the sittings of the Union Society, of which Endymion had for some time been a member, and of whose meetings he was a constant and critical, though silent, attendant. There was a debate one night on the government of dependencies, which, although all reference to existing political circumstances was rigidly prohibited, no doubt had its origin in the critical state of one of our most important colonies, then much embarrassing the metropolis. The subject was one which Endymion had considered, and on which he had arrived at certain conclusions. The meeting was fully attended, and the debate had been conducted with a gravity becoming the theme. Endymion was sitting on a back bench, and with no companion near him with whom he was acquainted, when he rose and solicited the attention of the president. Another and a well-known speaker had also risen, and been called, but there was a cry of 'new member,' a courteous cry, borrowed from the House of Commons, and Endymion for the first time heard his own voice in public. He has since admitted, though he has been through many trying scenes, that it was the most nervous moment of his life. 'After Calais,' as a wise wit said, 'nothing surprises;' and the first time a man speaks in public, even if only at a debating society, is also the unequalled incident in its way. The indulgence of the audience supported him while the mist cleared from his vision, and his palpitating heart subsided into comparative tranquillity. After a few pardonable incoherencies, he was launched into his subject, and spoke with the thoughtful fluency which knowledge alone can sustain. For knowledge is the foundation of eloquence.

'What a good-looking young fellow!' whispered Mr. Bertie Tremaine to his brother Mr. Tremaine Bertie. The Bertie Tremaines were the two greatest swells of the Union, and had a party of their own. 'And he speaks well.'

'Who is he?' inquired Mr. Tremaine Bertie of their other neighbour.

'He is a clerk in the Treasury, I believe, or something of that sort,' was the reply.

'I never saw such a good-looking young fellow,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'He is worth getting hold of. I shall ask to be introduced to him when we break up.'

Accordingly, Mr. Bertie Tremaine, who was always playing at politics, and who, being two-and-twenty, was discontented he was not Chancellor of the Exchequer like Mr. Pitt, whispered to a gentleman who sate behind him, and was, in short, the whip of his section, and signified, as a minister of state would, that an introduction to Mr. Ferrars should be arranged.

So when the meeting broke up, of which Mr. Ferrars' maiden speech was quite the event, and while he was contemplating, not without some fair self-complacency, walking home with Trenchard, Endymion found himself encompassed by a group of bowing forms and smiling countenances, and, almost before he was aware of it, had made the acquaintance of the great Mr. Bertie Tremaine, and received not only the congratulations of that gentleman, but an invitation to dine with him on the morrow; 'quite *sans façon*.'

Mr. Bertie Tremaine, who had early succeeded to the family estate, lived in Grosvenor Street, and in becoming style. His house was furnished with luxury and some taste. The host received his guests in a library, well stored with political history and political science, and adorned with the busts of celebrated statesmen and of profound political sages. Bentham was the philosopher then affected by young gentlemen of ambition, and who wished to have credit for profundity and hard heads. Mr. Bertie Tremaine had been the proprietor of a close borough, which for several generations had returned his family to parliament, the faithful supporters of Pitt, and Perceval, and Liverpool, and he had contemplated following the same line, though with larger and higher objects than his ancestors. Being a man of considerable and versatile ability, and of ample fortune, with the hereditary opportunity which he possessed, he had a right to aspire, and, as his vanity more than equalled his talents, his estimate of his own career was not mean. Unfortunately, before he left Harrow, he was deprived of his borough, and this

catastrophe eventually occasioned a considerable change in the views and conduct of Mr. Bertie Tremaine. In the confusion of parties and political thought which followed the Reform Act of Lord Grey, an attempt to govern the country by the assertion of abstract principles, and which it was now beginning to be the fashion to call Liberalism, seemed the only opening to public life; and Mr. Bertie Tremaine, who piqued himself on recognising the spirit of the age, adopted Liberal opinions with that youthful fervour which is sometimes called enthusiasm, but which is a heat of imagination subsequently discovered to be inconsistent with the experience of actual life. At Cambridge Mr. Bertie Tremaine was at first the solitary pupil of Bentham, whose principles he was prepared to carry to their extreme consequences, but being a man of energy and in possession of a good estate, he soon found followers, for the sympathies of youth are quick, and, even with an original bias, it is essentially mimetic. When Mr. Bertie Tremaine left the university he found in the miscellaneous elements of the London Union many of his former companions of school and college, and from them, and the new world to which he was introduced, it delighted him to form parties and construct imaginary cabinets. His brother Augustus, who was his junior only by a year, and was destined to be a diplomatist, was an efficient assistant in these enterprises, and was one of the guests who greeted Endymion when he arrived next day in Grosvenor Street according to his engagement. The other three were Hortensius, the whip of the party, and Mr. Trenchard.

The dinner was refined, for Mr. Bertie Tremaine combined the Sybarite with the Utilitarian sage, and it secretly delighted him to astonish or embarrass an austere brother republican by the splendour of his family plate or the polished appointments of his household. To-day the individual to be influenced was Endymion, and the host, acting up to his ideal of a first minister, addressed questions to his companions on the subjects which were peculiarly their own, and, after eliciting their remarks, continued or completed the treatment of the theme with adequate ability, though in a manner authoritative, and, as Endymion thought, a little pompous. What amused him most in this

assemblage of youth was their earnest affectation of public life. The freedom of their comments on others was only equalled by their confidence in themselves. Endymion, who only spoke when he was appealed to, had casually remarked in answer to one of the observations which his host with elaborate politeness occasionally addressed to him, that he thought it was unpatriotic to take a certain course. Mr. Bertie Tremaine immediately drew up, and said, with a deep smile, 'that he comprehended philanthropy, but patriotism he confessed he did not understand;' and thereupon delivered himself of an address on the subject which might have been made in the Union, and which communicated to the astonished Endymion that patriotism was a false idea, and entirely repugnant to the principles of the new philosophy. As all present were more or less impregnated with these tenets, there was no controversy on the matter. Endymion remained discreetly silent, and Augustus—Mr. Bertie Tremaine's brother—who sate next to him, and whose manners were as sympathising as his brother's were autocratic, whispered in a wheedling tone that it was quite true, and that the idea of patriotism was entirely relinquished except by a few old-fashioned folks who clung to superstitious phrases. Hortensius, who seemed to be the only one of the company who presumed to meet Mr. Bertie Tremaine in conversation on equal terms, and who had already astonished Endymion by what that inexperienced youth deemed the extreme laxity of his views, both social and political, evinced, more than once, a disposition to deviate into the lighter topics of feminine character, and even the fortunes of the hazard-table; but the host looked severe, and was evidently resolved that the conversation to-day should resemble the expression of his countenance. After dinner they returned to the library, and most of them smoked, but Mr. Bertie Tremaine, inviting Endymion to seat himself by his side on a sofa at the farther end of the room, observed, 'I suppose you are looking to parliament?'

'Well, I do not know,' said the somewhat startled Endymion; 'I have not thought much about it, and I have not yet reached a parliamentary age.'

'A man cannot enter parliament too soon,' said Mr. Bertie

Tremaine; 'I hope to enter this session. There will be a certain vacancy on a petition, and I have arranged to have the seat.'

'Indeed!' said Endymion. 'My father was in parliament, and so was my grandfather, but I confess I do not very well see my way there.'

'You must connect yourself with a party,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'and you will soon enter; and being young, you should connect yourself with the party of the future. The country is wearied with the present men, who have no philosophical foundation, and are therefore perpetually puzzled and inconsistent, and the country will not stand the old men, as it is resolved against retrogression. The party of the future and of the speedy future has its headquarters under this roof, and I should like to see you belong to it.'

'You are too kind,' murmured Endymion.

'Yes, I see in you the qualities adapted to public life, and which may be turned to great account. I must get you into parliament as soon as you are eligible,' continued Mr. Bertie Tremaine in a musing tone. 'This death of the King was very inopportune. If he had reigned a couple of years more, I saw my way to half a dozen seats, and I could have arranged with Lord Durham.'

'That was unfortunate,' said Endymion.

'What do you think of Hortensius?' inquired Mr. Bertie Tremaine.

'I think him the most brilliant speaker I know,' said Endymion. 'I never met him in private society before; he talks well.'

'He wants conduct,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'He ought to be my Lord Chancellor, but there is a tone of levity about him which is unfortunate. Men destined to the highest places should beware of badinage.'

'I believe it is a dangerous weapon.'

'All lawyers are loose in their youth, but an insular country subject to fogs, and with a powerful middle class, requires grave statesmen. I attribute a great deal of the nonsense called Conservative Reaction to Peel's solemnity. The proper minister for England at this moment would be Pitt. Extreme youth gives

hope to a country; coupled with ceremonious manners, hope soon assumes the form of confidence.'

'Ah!' murmured Endymion.

'I had half a mind to ask Jawett to dinner to-day. His powers are unquestionable, but he is not a practical man. For instance, I think myself our colonial empire is a mistake, and that we should disembarrass ourselves of its burthen as rapidly as is consistent with the dignity of the nation; but were Jawett in the House of Commons to-morrow, nothing would satisfy him but a resolution for the total and immediate abolition of the empire, with a preamble denouncing the folly of our fathers in creating it. Jawett never spares any one's self-love.'

'I know him very well,' said Endymion; 'he is in my office. He is very uncompromising.'

'Yes,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine musingly; 'if I had to form a government, I could hardly offer him the cabinet.' Then speaking more rapidly, he added, 'The man you should attach yourself to is my brother Augustus—Mr. Tremaine Bertie. There is no man who understands foreign politics like Augustus, and he is a thorough man of the world.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When parliament reassembled in February, the Neuchatels quitted Hainault for their London residence in Portland Place. Mrs. Neuchatel was sadly troubled at leaving her country home, which, notwithstanding its distressing splendour, had still some forms of compensatory innocence in its flowers and sylvan glades. Adriana sighed when she called to mind the manifold and mortifying snares and pitfalls that awaited her, and had even framed a highly practical and sensible scheme which would permit her parents to settle in town and allow Myra and herself to remain permanently in the country; but Myra brushed away the project like a fly, and Adriana yielding, embraced her with tearful eyes.

The Neuchatel mansion in Portland Place was one of the noblest in that comely quarter of the town, and replete with

every charm and convenience that wealth and taste could provide. Myra, who, like her brother, had a tenacious memory, was interested in recalling as fully and as accurately as possible her previous experience of London life. She was then indeed only a child, but a child who was often admitted to brilliant circles, and had enjoyed opportunities of social observation which the very youthful seldom possess. Her retrospection was not as profitable as she could have desired, and she was astonished, after a severe analysis of the past, to find how entirely at that early age she appeared to have been engrossed with herself and with Endymion. Hill Street and Wimbledon, and all their various life, figured as shadowy scenes; she could realise nothing very definite for her present guidance; the past seemed a phantom of fine dresses, and bright equipages, and endless indulgence. All that had happened after their fall was distinct and full of meaning. It would seem that adversity had taught Myra to feel and think.

Forty years ago the great financiers had not that commanding, not to say predominant, position in society which they possess at present, but the Neuchatels were an exception to this general condition. They were a family which not only had the art of accumulating wealth, but of expending it with taste and generosity—an extremely rare combination. Their great riches, their political influence, their high integrity and their social accomplishments, combined to render their house not only splendid, but interesting and agreeable, and gave them a great hold upon the world. At first the fine ladies of their political party called on them as a homage of condescending gratitude for the public support which the Neuchatel family gave to their sons and husbands, but they soon discovered that this amiable descent from their Olympian heights on their part did not amount exactly to the sacrifice or service which they had contemplated. They found their host as refined as themselves, and much more magnificent, and in a very short time it was not merely the wives of ambassadors and ministers of state that were found at the garden fêtes of Hainault, or the balls, and banquets, and concerts of Portland Place, but the fitful and capricious realm of fashion surrendered like a fair country

conquered as it were by surprise. To visit the Neuchatels became the mode; all solicited to be their guests, and some solicited in vain.

Although it was only February, the world began to move, and some of the ministers' wives, who were socially strong enough to venture on such a step, received their friends. Mr. Neuchatel particularly liked this form of society. 'I cannot manage balls,' he used to say, 'but I like a ministerial reception. There is some chance of sensible conversation and doing a little business. I like talking with ambassadors after dinner. Besides, in this country you meet the leaders of the opposition, because, as they are not invited by the minister, but by his wife, anybody can come without committing himself.'

Myra, faithful to her original resolution, not to enter society while she was in mourning, declined all the solicitations of her friends to accompany them to these assemblies. Mrs. Neuchatel always wished Myra should be her substitute, and it was only at Myra's instance that Adriana accompanied her parents. In the meantime, Myra saw much of Endymion. He was always a welcome guest by the family, and could call upon his sister at all the odds and ends of time that were at his command, and chat with her at pleasant ease in her pretty room. Sometimes they walked out together, and sometimes they went together to see some exhibition that everybody went to see. Adriana became almost as intimate with Endymion as his sister, and altogether the Neuchatel family became by degrees to him as a kind of home. Talking with Endymion, Myra heard a good deal of Colonel Albert, for he was her brother's hero—but she rarely saw that gentleman. She was aware from her brother, and from some occasional words of Mr. Neuchatel, that the great banker still saw Colonel Albert and not unfrequently, but the change of residence from Hainault to London made a difference in their mode of communication. Business was transacted in Bishopsgate Street, and no longer combined with a pleasant ride to an Essex forest. More than once Colonel Albert had dined in Portland Place, but at irregular and miscellaneous parties. Myra observed that he was never asked to meet the grand personages who attended the

celebrated banquets of Mr. Neuchatel. And why not? His manners were distinguished, and his whole bearing that of one accustomed to consideration. The irrepressible curiosity of woman impelled her once to feel her way on the subject with Mr. Neuchatel, but with the utmost dexterity and delicacy.

'No,' said Mr. Neuchatel with a laughing eye, and who saw through everybody's purpose, though his own manner was one of simplicity amounting almost to innocence, 'I did not say Colonel Albert was going to dine here on Wednesday; I have asked him to dine here on Sunday. On Wednesday I am going to have the premier and some of his colleagues. I must insist upon Miss Ferrars dining at table. You will meet Lord Roehampton; all the ladies admire him and he admires all the ladies. It will not do to ask Colonel Albert to meet such a party, though perhaps,' added Mr. Neuchatel with a merry smile, 'some day they may be asked to meet Colonel Albert. Who knows, Miss Ferrars? The wheel of Fortune turns round very strangely.'

'And who then is Colonel Albert?' asked Myra with decision.

'Colonel Albert is Colonel Albert, and nobody else, so far as I know,' replied Mr. Neuchatel; 'he has brought a letter of credit on my house in that name, and I am happy to honour his drafts to the amount in question, and as he is a foreigner, I think it is but kind and courteous occasionally to ask him to dinner.'

Miss Ferrars did not pursue the inquiry, for she was sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Neuchatel to feel that he did not intend to gratify her curiosity.

The banquet of the Neuchatels to the premier, and some of the principal ambassadors and their wives, and to those of the premier's colleagues who were fashionable enough to be asked, and to some of the dukes and duchesses and other ethereal beings who supported the ministry, was the first event of the season. The table blazed with rare flowers and rarer porcelain and precious candelabra of sculptured beauty glittering with light; the gold plate was less remarkable than the delicate ware that had been alike moulded and adorned for a Du Barri or a Marie Antoinette, and which now found a permanent and peaceful

home in the proverbial land of purity and order; and amid the stars and ribbons, not the least remarkable feature of the whole was Mr. Neuchatel himself, seated at the centre of his table, alike free from ostentation or over-deference, talking to the great ladies on each side of him, as if he had nothing to do in life but whisper in gentle ears, and partaking of his own dainties as if he were eating bread and cheese at a country inn.

Perhaps Mrs. Neuchatel might have afforded a companion picture. Partly in deference to their host, and partly because this evening the first dance of the season was to be given, the great ladies in general wore their diamonds, and Myra was amused as she watched their dazzling tiaras and flashing rivières, while not a single ornament adorned the graceful presence of their hostess, who was more content to be brilliant only by her conversation. As Mr. Neuchatel had only a few days before presented his wife with another diamond necklace, he might be excused were he slightly annoyed. Nothing of the sort; he only shrugged his shoulders, and said to his nephew, 'Your aunt must feel that I give her diamonds from love and not from vanity, as she never lets me have the pleasure of seeing them.' The sole ornament of Adriana was an orchid, which had arrived that morning from Hainault, and she had presented its fellow to Myra.

There was one lady who much attracted the attention of Myra, interested in all she observed. This lady was evidently a person of importance, for she sate between an ambassador and a knight of the garter, and they vied in homage to her. They watched her every word, and seemed delighted with all she said. Without being strictly beautiful, there was an expression of sweet animation in her physiognomy which was highly attractive: her eye was full of summer lightning, and there was an arch dimple in her smile, which seemed to irradiate her whole countenance. She was quite a young woman, hardly older than Myra. What most distinguished her was the harmony of her whole person; her graceful figure, her fair and finely moulded shoulders, her pretty teeth, and her small extremities, seemed to blend with and become the soft vivacity of her winning glance.

'Lady Montfort looks well to-night,' said the neighbour of Myra.

'And is that Lady Montfort? Do you know, I never saw her before.'

'Yes; that is the famous Berengaria, the Queen of Society, and the genius of Whiggism.'

In the evening, a great lady, who was held to have the finest voice in society, favoured them with a splendid specimen of her commanding skill, and then Adriana was induced to gratify her friends with a song, 'only one song,' and that only on condition that Myra should accompany her. Miss Neuchatel had a sweet and tender voice, and it had been finely cultivated; she would have been more than charming if she had only taken interest in anything she herself did, or believed for a moment that she could interest others. When she ceased, a gentleman approached the instrument and addressed her in terms of sympathy and deferential praise. Myra recognised the knight of the garter who had sat next to Lady Montfort. He was somewhat advanced in middle life, tall and of a stately presence, with a voice more musical even than the tones which had recently enchanted every one. His countenance was impressive, a truly Olympian brow, but the lower part of the face indicated not feebleness, but flexibility, and his mouth was somewhat sensuous. His manner was at once winning; natural, and singularly unaffected, and seemed to sympathise entirely with those whom he addressed.

'But I have never been at Hainault,' said the gentleman, continuing a conversation, 'and therefore could not hear the nightingales. I am content you have brought one of them to town.'

'Nightingales disappear in June,' said Miss Ferrars; 'so our season will be short.'

'And where do they travel to?' asked the gentleman.

'Ah! that is a mystery,' said Myra. 'You must ask Miss Neuchatel.'

'But she will not tell me,' said the gentleman, for in truth Miss Neuchatel, though he had frequently addressed her, had scarcely opened her lips.

'Tell your secret, Adriana,' said Miss Ferrars, trying to force her to converse.

'Adriana!' said the gentleman. 'What a beautiful name! You look with that flower, Miss Neuchatel, like a bride of Venice.'

'Nay,' said Myra; 'the bride of Venice was a stormy ocean.'

'And have you a Venetian name?' asked the gentleman.

There was a pause, and then Miss Neuchatel, with an effort, murmured, 'She has a very pretty name. Her name is Myra.'

'She seems to deserve it,' said the gentleman.

'So you like my daughter's singing,' said Mr. Neuchatel, coming up to them. 'She does not much like singing in public, but she is a very good girl, and always gives me a song when I come home from business.'

'Fortunate man!' said the gentleman. 'I wish somebody would sing to me when I come home from business.'

'You should marry, my lord,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'and get your wife to sing to you. Is it not so, Miss Ferrars? By the by, I ought to introduce you to—Lord Roehampton.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Earl of Roehampton was the strongest member of the government, except, of course, the premier himself. He was the man from whose combined force and flexibility of character the country had confidence that in all their councils there would be no lack of courage, yet tempered with adroit discretion. Lord Roehampton, though an Englishman, was an Irish peer, and was resolved to remain so, for he fully appreciated the position, which united social distinction with the power of a seat in the House of Commons. He was a very ambitious, and, as it was thought, worldly man, deemed even by many to be unscrupulous, and yet he was romantic. A great favourite in society, and especially with the softer sex, somewhat late in life, he had married suddenly a beautiful woman, who was without fortune, and not a member of the enchanted circle in which he flourished. The union had been successful, for Lord Roehampton was gifted with a sweet temper, and, though people said he had no heart, with a winning tenderness of disposition, or at least of manner, which at the same time charmed and soothed. He had been a

widower for two years, and the world was of opinion that he ought to marry again, and form this time a becoming alliance. In addition to his many recommendations he had now the inestimable reputation, which no one had ever contemplated for him, of having been a good husband.

Berengaria, Countess of Montfort, was a great friend of Lord Roehampton. She was accustomed to describe herself as 'the last of his conquests,' and though Lord Roehampton read characters and purposes with a glance, and was too sagacious to be deceived by any one, even by himself, his gratified taste, for he scarcely had vanity, cherished the bright illusion of which he was conscious, and he responded to Lady Montfort half sportively, half seriously, with an air of flattered devotion. Lord Roehampton had inherited an ample estate, and he had generally been in office; for he served his apprenticeship under Perceval and Liverpool, and changed his party just in time to become a member of the Cabinet of 1831. Yet with all these advantages, whether it were the habit of his life, which was ever profuse, or that neglect of his private interests which almost inevitably accompanies the absorbing duties of public life, his affairs were always somewhat confused, and Lady Montfort, who wished to place him on a pinnacle, had resolved that he should marry an heiress. After long observation and careful inquiry and prolonged reflection, the lady she had fixed upon was Miss Neuchatel; and she it was who had made Lord Roehampton cross the room and address Adriana after her song.

'He is not young,' reasoned Lady Montfort to herself, 'but his mind and manner are young, and that is everything. I am sure I meet youth every day who, compared with Lord Roehampton, could have no chance with my sex—men who can neither feel, nor think, nor converse. And then he is famous, and powerful, and fashionable, and knows how to talk to women. And this must all tell with a banker's daughter, dying, of course, to be a *grande dame*. It will do. He may not be young, but he is irresistible. And the father will like it, for he told me in confidence, at dinner, that he wished Lord Roehampton to be prime minister; and with this alliance he will be.'

The plot being devised by a fertile brain never wanting in

expedients, its development was skilfully managed, and its accomplishment anticipated with confidence. It was remarkable with what dexterity the Neuchatel family and Lord Roehampton were brought together. Berengaria's lord and master was in the country, which he said he would not quit; but this did not prevent her giving delightful little dinners and holding select assemblies on nights when there was no dreadful House of Commons, and Lord Roehampton could be present. On most occasions, and especially on these latter ones, Lady Montfort could not endure existence without her dear Adriana. Mr. Neuchatel, who was a little in the plot, who at least smiled when Berengaria alluded to her enterprise, was not wanting in his contributions to its success. He hardly ever gave one of his famous banquets to which Lord Roehampton was not invited, and, strange to say, Lord Roehampton, who had the reputation of being somewhat difficult on this head, always accepted the invitations. The crowning social incident, however, was when Lord Roehampton opened his own house for the first time since his widowhood, and received the Neuchatels at a banquet not inferior to their own. This was a great triumph for Lady Montfort, who thought the end was at hand.

'Life is short,' she said to Lord Roehampton that evening. 'Why not settle it to-night?'

'Well,' said Lord Roehampton, 'you know I never like anything precipitate. Besides, why should the citadel surrender when I have hardly entered on my first parallel?'

'Ah! those are old-fashioned tactics,' said Lady Montfort.

'Well, I suppose I am an old-fashioned man.'

'Be serious, now. I want it settled before Easter. I must go down to my lord then, and even before; and I should like to see this settled before we separate.'

'Why does not Montfort come up to town?' said Lord Roehampton. 'He is wanted.'

'Well,' said Lady Montfort, with half a sigh, 'it is no use talking about it. He will not come. Our society bores him, and he must be amused. I write to him every day, and sometimes twice a-day, and pass my life in collecting things to interest him. I would never leave him for a moment, only I

know then that he would get wearied of me; and he thinks now—at least, he once said so—that he has never had a dull moment in my company.'

'How can he find amusement in the country?' said Lord Roehampton. 'There is no sport now, and a man cannot always be reading French novels.'

'Well, I send amusing people down to him,' said Berengaria. 'It is difficult to arrange, for he does not like toadies, which is so unreasonable, for I know many toadies who are very pleasant. Treeby is with him now, and that is excellent, for Treeby contradicts him, and is scientific as well as fashionable, and gives him the last news of the sun as well as of White's. I want to get this great African traveller to go down to him; but one can hardly send a perfect stranger as a guest. I wanted Treeby to take him, but Treeby refused—men are so selfish. Treeby could have left him there, and the traveller might have remained a week, told all he had seen, and as much more as he liked. My lord cannot stand Treeby more than two days, and Treeby cannot stand my lord for a longer period, and that is why they are such friends.'

'A sound basis of agreement,' said Lord Roehampton. 'I believe absence is often a great element of charm.'

'But, à nos moutons,' resumed Lady Montfort. 'You see now why I am so anxious for a conclusion of our affair. I think it is ripe?'

'Why do you?' said Lord Roehampton.

'Well, she must be very much in love with you.'

'Has she told you so?'

'No; but she looks in love.'

'She never has told me so,' said Lord Roehampton.

'Have you told her?'

'Well, I have not,' said her companion. 'I like the family—all of them. I like Neuchatel particularly. I like his house and style of living. You always meet nice people there, and hear the last thing that has been said or done all over the world. It is a house where you are sure not to be dull.'

'You have described a perfect home,' said Lady Montfort, 'and it awaits you.'

'Well, I do not know,' said Lord Roehampton. 'Perhaps I am fastidious, perhaps I am content; to be noticed sometimes by a Lady Montfort should, I think, satisfy any man.'

'Well, that is gallant, but it is not business, my dear lord. You can count on my devotion even when you are married; but I want to see you on a pinnacle, so that if anything happens there shall be no question who is to be the first man in this country.'

CHAPTER XL.

The meeting of parliament caused also the return of Waldershare to England, and brought life and enjoyment to our friends in Warwick Street. Waldershare had not taken his seat in the autumn session. After the general election, he had gone abroad with Lord Beaumaris, the young nobleman who had taken them to the Derby, and they had seen and done many strange things. During all their peregrinations, however, Waldershare maintained a constant correspondence with Imogene, occasionally sending her a choice volume, which she was not only to read, but to prove her perusal of it by forwarding to him a criticism of its contents.

Endymion was too much pleased to meet Waldershare again, and told him of the kind of intimacy he had formed with Colonel Albert and all about the baron. Waldershare was much interested in these details, and it was arranged that an opportunity should be taken to make the colonel and Waldershare acquainted.

This, however, was not an easy result to bring about, for Waldershare insisted on its not occurring formally, and as the colonel maintained the utmost reserve with the household, and Endymion had no room of reception, weeks passed over without Waldershare knowing more of Colonel Albert personally than sometimes occasionally seeing him mount his horse.

In the meantime life in Warwick Street, so far as the Rodney family were concerned, appeared to have re-assumed its pleasant, and what perhaps we are authorised in styling its normal condition. They went to the play two or three times a week, and

there Waldershare or Lord Beaumaris, frequently both, always joined them; and then they came home to supper, and then they smoked; and sometimes there was a little singing, and sometimes a little whist. Occasionally there was only conversation, that is to say, Waldershare held forth, dilating on some wondrous theme, full of historical anecdote, and dazzling paradox, and happy phrase. All listened with interest, even those who did not understand him. Much of his talk was addressed really to Beaumaris, whose mind he was forming, as well as that of Imogene. Beaumaris was an hereditary Whig, but had not personally committed himself, and the ambition of Waldershare was to transform him not only into a Tory, but one of the old rock, a real Jacobite. 'Is not the Tory party,' Waldershare would exclaim, 'a succession of heroic spirits, "beautiful and swift," ever in the van, and foremost of their age?—Hobbes and Bolingbroke, Hume and Adam Smith, Wyndham and Cobham, Pitt and Grenville, Canning and Huskisson?—Are not the principles of Toryism those popular rights which men like Shippen and Hynde Cotton flung in the face of an alien monarch and his mushroom aristocracy?—Place bills, triennial bills, opposition to standing armies, to peerage bills?—Are not the traditions of the Tory party the noblest pedigree in the world? Are not its illustrations that glorious martyrology, that opens with the name of Falkland and closes with the name of Canning?'

'I believe it is all true,' whispered Lord Beaumaris to Sylvia, who had really never heard of any of these gentlemen before, but looked most sweet and sympathetic.

'He is a wonderful man—Mr. Waldershare,' said Mr. Vigo to Rodney, 'but I fear not practical.'

One day, not very long after his return from his travels, Waldershare went to breakfast with his uncle, Mr. Sidney Wilton, now a cabinet minister, still unmarried, and living in Grosvenor Square. Notwithstanding the difference of their politics, an affectionate intimacy subsisted between them; indeed Waldershare was a favourite of his uncle, who enjoyed the freshness of his mind, and quite appreciated his brilliancy of thought and speech, his quaint reading and effervescent imagination.

'And so you think we are in for life, George,' said Mr. Wilton, taking a piece of toast. 'I do not.'

'Well, I go upon this,' said Waldershare. 'It is quite clear that Peel has nothing to offer the country, and the country will not rally round a negation. When he failed in '34 they said there had not been sufficient time for the reaction to work. Well, now, since then, it has had nearly three years, during which you fellows have done everything to outrage every prejudice of the constituency, and yet they have given you a majority.'

'Yes, that is all very well,' replied Mr. Wilton, 'but we are the Liberal shop, and we have no Liberal goods on hand; we are the party of movement, and must perforce stand still. The fact is, all the great questions are settled. No one will burn his fingers with the Irish Church again, in this generation certainly not, probably in no other; you could not get ten men together in any part of the country to consider the corn laws; I must confess I regret it. I still retain my opinion that a moderate fixed duty would be a wise arrangement, but I quite despair in my time of any such advance of opinion; as for the ballot, it is hardly tolerated in debating societies. The present government, my dear George, will expire from inanition. I always told the cabinet they were going on too fast. They should have kept back municipal reform. It would have carried us on for five years. It was our only *pièce de résistance.*'

'I look upon the House of Commons as a mere vestry,' said Waldershare. 'I believe it to be completely used up. Reform has dished it. There are no men, and naturally, because the constituencies elect themselves, and the constituencies are the most mediocre of the nation. The House of Commons now is like a spendthrift living on his capital. The business is done and the speeches are made by men formed in the old school. The influence of the House of Commons is mainly kept up by old social traditions. I believe if the eldest sons of peers now members would all accept the Chiltern hundreds, and the House thus cease to be fashionable, before a year was past, it would be as odious and as contemptible as the Rump Parliament.'

'Well, you are now the eldest son of a peer,' said Sidney

Wilton, smiling. 'Why do you not set an example, instead of spending your father's substance and your own in fighting a corrupt borough?'

'I am *vox clamantis*,' said Waldershare. 'I do not despair of its being done. But what I want is some big guns to do it. Let the eldest son of a Tory duke and the eldest son of a Whig duke do the thing on the same day, and give the reason why. If Saxmundham, for example, and Harlaxton would do it, the game would be up.'

'On the contrary,' said Mr. Wilton, 'Saxmundham, I can tell you, will be the new cabinet minister.'

'Degenerate land!' exclaimed Waldershare. 'Ah! in the eighteenth century there was always a cause to sustain the political genius of the country,—the cause of the rightful dynasty.'

'Well, thank God, we have got rid of all those troubles,' said Mr. Wilton.

'Rid of them! I do not know that. I saw a great deal of the Duke of Modena this year, and tried as well as I could to open his mind to the situation.'

'You traitor!' exclaimed Mr. Wilton. 'If I were Secretary of State, I would order the butler to arrest you immediately, and send you to the Tower in a hack cab; but as I am only a President of a Board and your uncle, you will escape.'

'Well, I should think all sensible men,' said Waldershare, 'of all parties will agree, that before we try a republic, it would be better to give a chance to the rightful heir.'

'Well, I am not a republican,' said Mr. Wilton, 'and I think Queen Victoria, particularly if she make a wise and happy marriage, need not much fear the Duke of Modena.'

'He is our sovereign lord, all the same,' said Waldershare. 'I wish he were more aware of it himself. Instead of looking to a restoration to his throne, I found him always harping on the fear of French invasion. I could not make him understand that France was his natural ally, and that without her help, Charlie was not likely to have his own again.'

'Well, as you admire pretenders, George, I wish you were in my shoes this morning, for I have got one of the most disagreeable interviews on hand which ever fell to my lot.'

'How so, my dear uncle?' said Waldershare, in a tone of sympathy, for he saw that the countenance of Mr. Wilton was disturbed.

'My unhappy ward,' said Mr. Wilton; 'you know, of course, something about him.'

'Well, I was at school and college,' said Waldershare, 'when it all happened. But I have just heard that you had relations with him.'

'The most intimate; and there is the bitterness. There existed between his mother Queen Agrippina and myself ties of entire friendship. In her last years and in her greatest adversity she appealed to me to be the guardian of her son. He inherited all her beauty and apparently all her sweetness of disposition. I took the greatest pains with him. He was at Eton, and did well there. He was very popular; I never was so deceived in a boy in my life. I thought him the most docile of human beings, and that I had gained over him an entire influence. I am sure it would have been exercised for his benefit. In short, I may say it now, I looked upon him as a son, and he certainly would have been my heir; and yet all this time, from his seventeenth year, he was immersed in political intrigue, and carrying on plots against the sovereign of his country, even under my own roof.'

'How very interesting!' said Waldershare.

'It may be interesting to you; I know what it cost me. The greatest anxiety and sorrow, and even nearly compromised my honour. Had I not a large-hearted chief and a true man of the world to deal with, I must have retired from the government.'

'How could he manage it?' said Waldershare.

'You have no conception of the devices and resources of the secret societies of Europe,' said Mr. Wilton. 'His drawing-master, his fencing-master, his dancing-master, all his professors of languages, who delighted me by their testimony to his accomplishments and their praises of his quickness and assiduity, were active confederates in bringing about events which might have occasioned an European war. He left me avowedly to pay a visit in the country, and I even received letters from him with the postmark of the neighbouring town;

letters all prepared beforehand. My first authentic information as to his movements was to learn, that he had headed an invading force, landed on the shores which he claimed as his own, was defeated and a prisoner.'

'I remember it,' said Waldershare. 'I had just then gone up to St. John's, and I remember reading it with the greatest excitement.'

'All this was bad enough,' said Mr. Wilton, 'but this is not my sorrow. I saved him from death, or at least a dreadful imprisonment. He was permitted to sail to America on his parole that he would never return to Europe, and I was required, and on his solemn appeal I consented, to give my personal engagement that the compact should be sacred. Before two years had elapsed, supported all this time, too, by my bounty, there was an attempt, almost successful, to assassinate the king, and my ward was discovered and seized in the capital. This time he was immured, and for life, in the strongest fortress of the country; but secret societies laugh at governments, and though he endured a considerable imprisonment, the world has recently been astounded by hearing that he had escaped. Yes; he is in London and has been here, though in studied obscurity, for some little time. He has never appealed to me until within these few days, and now only on the ground that there are some family affairs which cannot be arranged without my approval. I had great doubts whether I should receive him. I feel I ought not to have done so. But I hesitated, and I know not what may be the truth about women, but of this I am quite sure, the man who hesitates is lost.'

'How I should like to be present at the interview, my dear uncle!' said Waldershare.

'And I should not be sorry to have a witness,' said Mr. Wilton, 'but it is impossible. I am ashamed to say how unhinged I feel; no person, and no memories, ought to exercise such an influence over one. To tell you the truth, I encouraged your pleasant gossip at breakfast by way of distraction at this moment, and now'——

At this moment, the groom of the chambers entered and announced 'His royal highness, Prince Florestan.'

Mr. Wilton, who was too agitated to speak, waved his hand to Waldershare to retire, and his nephew vanished. As Waldershare was descending the staircase, he drew back on a landing-place to permit the prince to advance undisturbed. The prince apparently did not observe him, but when Waldershare caught the countenance of the visitor, he started.

CHAPTER XLI.

'I KNOW, sir, you are prejudiced against me,' said Prince Florestan, bowing before Mr. Wilton with a sort of haughty humility, 'and therefore I the more appreciate your condescension in receiving me.'

'I have no wish to refer to the past,' said Mr. Wilton somewhat sternly. 'You mentioned in your letter that my co-operation was necessary with reference to your private affairs, of which I once was a trustee, and under those circumstances I felt it my duty to accede to your request. I wish our communication to be limited to that business.'

'It shall be so strictly,' said the prince; 'you may remember, sir, that at the unhappy period when we were deprived of our throne, the name of Queen Agrippina was inscribed on the great book of the state for a considerable sum, for which the credit of the state was pledged to her. It was strictly her private property, and had mainly accrued through the sale of the estates of her ancestors. This sum was confiscated, and several other amounts, which belonged to members of our house and to our friends. It was an act of pure rapine, so gross, that as time revolved, and the sense of justice gradually returned to the hearts of men, restitution was made in every instance except my own, though I have reason to believe that individual case was the strongest. My bankers, the house of Neuchatel, who have much interested themselves in this matter, and have considerable influence with the government that succeeded us, have brought things to this pass, that we have reason to believe our claim would be conceded, if some of the foreign govern-

ments, and especially the government of this country, would signify that the settlement would not be disagreeable to them.' And the prince ceased, and raising his eyes, which were downcast as he spoke, looked Mr. Wilton straight in the face.

'Before such a proposal could even be considered by Her Majesty's Government,' said Mr. Wilton with a reddening cheek, 'the intimation must be made to them by authority. If the minister of your country has such an intimation to make to ours, he should address himself to the proper quarter, to Lord Roehampton.'

'I understand,' said Prince Florestan; 'but governments, like individuals, sometimes shrink from formality. The government of my country will act on the intimation, but they do not care to make it an affair of despatches.'

'There is only one way of transacting business,' said Mr. Wilton frigidly, and as if, so far as he was concerned, the interview was ended.

'I have been advised on high authority,' said Prince Florestan, speaking very slowly, 'that if any member of the present cabinet will mention in conversation to the representative of my country here, that the act of justice would not be disagreeable to the British Government, the affair is finished.'

'I doubt whether any one of my colleagues would be prepared to undertake a personal interference of that kind with a foreign government,' said Mr. Wilton stiffly. 'For my own part, I have had quite enough of such interpositions never to venture on them again.'

'The expression of feeling desired would involve no sort of engagement,' said the imperturbable prince.

'That depends on the conscience of the individual who interferes. No man of honour would be justified in so interposing if he believed he was thus furnishing arms against the very government of which he solicited the favour.'

'But why should he believe this?' asked the prince with great calmness.

'I think upon reflection,' said Mr. Wilton, taking up at the same time an opened letter which was before him, as if he wished to resume the private business on which he had been

previously engaged, 'that your royal highness might find very adequate reasons for the belief.'

'I would put this before you with great deference, sir,' said the prince. 'Take my own case; is it not more likely that I should lead that life of refined retirement, which I really desire, were I in possession of the means to maintain such a position with becoming dignity, than if I were distressed, and harassed, and disgusted, every day, with sights and incidents which alike outrage my taste and self-respect? It is not prosperity, according to common belief, that makes conspirators.'

'You *were* in a position, and a refined position,' rejoined Mr. Wilton sharply; 'you had means adequate to all that a gentleman could desire, and might have been a person of great consideration, and you wantonly destroyed all this.'

'It might be remembered that I was young.'

'Yes, you were young, very young, and your folly was condoned. You might have begun life again, for to the world at least you were a man of honour. You had not deceived the world, whatever you might have done to others.'

'If I presume to make another remark,' said the prince calmly, but pale, 'it is only, believe me, sir, from the profound respect I feel for you. Do not misunderstand these feelings, sir. They are not unbecoming the past. Now that my mother has departed, there is no one to whom I am attached except yourself. I have no feeling whatever towards any other human being. All my thought and all my sentiment are engrossed by my country. But pardon me, dear sir, for so let me call you, if I venture to say that, in your decision on my conduct, you have never taken into consideration the position which I inherited.'

'I do not follow you, sir.'

'You never will remember, that I am the child of destiny,' said Prince Florestan. 'That destiny will again place me on the throne of my fathers. That is as certain as I am now speaking to you. But destiny for its fulfilment ordains action. Its decrees are inexorable, but they are obscure, and the being whose career it directs is as a man travelling in a dark night; he reaches his goal even without the aid of stars or moon.'

'I really do not understand what destiny means,' said Mr

Wilton. 'I understand what conduct means, and I recognise that it should be regulated by truth and honour. I think a man had better have nothing to do with destiny, particularly if it is to make him forfeit his parole.'

'Ah! sir, I well know that on that head you entertain a great prejudice in my respect. Believe me it is not just. Even lawyers acknowledge that a contract which is impossible cannot be violated. My return from America was inevitable. The aspirations of a great people and of many communities required my presence in Europe. My return was the natural development of the irresistible principle of historical necessity.'

'Well, that principle is not recognised by Her Majesty's Ministers,' said Mr. Wilton, and both himself and the prince seemed to rise at the same time.

'I thank you, sir, for this interview,' said his royal highness. 'You will not help me, but what I require will happen by some other means. It is necessary, and therefore it will occur.'

The prince remounted his horse, and rode off quickly till he reached the Strand, where obstacles to rapid progress commenced, and though impatient, it was some time before he reached Bishopsgate Street. He entered the spacious courtyard of a noble mansion, and, giving his horse to the groom, inquired for Mr. Neuchatel, to whom he was at once ushered,—seated in a fine apartment at a table covered with many papers.

'Well, my prince,' said Mr. Neuchatel with a smiling eye, 'what brings such a great man into the City to-day? Have you seen your great friend?' And then Prince Florestan gave Mr. Neuchatel a succinct but sufficient summary of his recent interview.

'Ah!' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'so it is, so it is; I dare say if you were received at St. James', Mr. Sidney Wilton would not be so very particular; but we must take things as we find them. If our fine friends will not help us, you must try us poor business men in the City. We can manage things here sometimes which puzzle them at the West End. I saw you were disturbed when you came in. Put on a good countenance. Nobody should ever look anxious except those who have no anxiety. I dare say you would like to know how your account is. I will send

for it. It is not so bad as you think. I put a thousand pounds to it in the hope that your fine friend would help us, but I shall not take it off again. My Louis is going to-night to Paris, and he shall call upon the ministers and see what can be done. In the meantime, good appetite, sir. I am going to luncheon, and there is a place for you. And I will show you my Gainsborough that I have just bought, from a family for whom it was painted. The face is divine, very like our Miss Ferrars. I am going to send the picture down to Hainault. I won't tell you what I gave for it, because perhaps you would tell my wife and she would be very angry. She would want the money for an infant school. But I think she has schools enough. Now to lunch.'

On the afternoon of this day there was half-holiday at the office, and Endymion had engaged to accompany Waldershare on some expedition. They had been talking together in his room where Waldershare was finishing his careless toilette, which however was never finished, and they had just opened the house door and were sallying forth when Colonel Albert rode up. He gave a kind nod to Endymion, but did not speak, and the companions went on. 'By the by, Ferrars,' said Waldershare, pressing his arm and bubbling with excitement, 'I have found out who your colonel is. It is a wondrous tale, and I will tell it all to you as we go on.'

CHAPTER XLII.

Endymion had now passed three years of his life in London, and considering the hard circumstances under which he had commenced this career, he might on the whole look back to those years without dissatisfaction. Three years ago he was poor and friendless, utterly ignorant of the world, and with nothing to guide him but his own good sense. His slender salary had not yet been increased, but with the generosity and aid of his sister and the liberality of Mr. Vigo, he was easy in his circumstances. Through the Rodneys, he had become acquainted with a certain sort of miscellaneous life, a knowledge of which is highly valu-

able to a youth, but which is seldom attained without risk. Endymion, on the contrary, was always guarded from danger. Through his most unexpected connection with the Neuchatel family, he had seen something of life in circles of refinement and high consideration, and had even caught glimpses of that great world of which he read so much and heard people talk more, the world of the Lord Roehamptons and the Lady Montforts, and all those dazzling people whose sayings and doings form the taste, and supply the conversation, and leaven the existence of admiring or wondering millions.

None of these incidents, however, had induced any change in the scheme of his existence. Endymion was still content with his cleanly and airy garret; still dined at Joe's; was still sedulous at his office, and always popular with his fellow clerks. Seymour Hicks, indeed, who studied the 'Morning Post' with intenseness, had discovered the name of Endymion in the elaborate lists of attendants on Mrs. Neuchatel's receptions, and had duly notified the important event to his colleagues; but Endymion was not severely bantered on the occasion, for, since the withdrawal of St. Barbe from the bureau, the stock of envy at Somerset House was sensibly diminished.

His lodging at the Rodneys', however, had brought Endymion something more valuable than an innocuous familiarity with their various and suggestive life. In the friendship of Waldershare he found a rich compensation for being withdrawn from his school and deprived of his university. The care of his father had made Endymion a good classical scholar, and he had realised a degree of culture which it delighted the brilliant and eccentric Waldershare to enrich and to complete. Waldershare guided his opinions, and directed his studies, and formed his taste. Alone at night in his garret, there was no solitude, for he had always some book or some periodical, English or foreign, with which Waldershare had supplied him, and which he assured Endymion it was absolutely necessary that he should read and master.

Nor was his acquaintance with Baron Sergius less valuable, or less fruitful of results. He too became interested in Endymion, and poured forth to him, apparently without reserve, all

the treasures of his vast experience of men and things, especially with reference to the conduct of external affairs. He initiated him in the cardinal principles of the policies of different nations; he revealed to him the real character of the chief actors in the scene. 'The first requisite,' Baron Sergius would say, 'in the successful conduct of public affairs is a personal acquaintance with the statesmen engaged. It is possible that events may not depend now, so much as they did a century ago, on individual feeling, but, even if prompted by general principles, their application and management are always coloured by the idiosyncrasy of the chief actors. The great advantage which your Lord Roehampton, for example, has over all his colleagues in *la haute politique*, is that he was one of your plenipotentiaries at the Congress of Vienna. There he learned to gauge the men who govern the world. Do you think a man like that, called upon to deal with a Metternich or a Pozzo, has no advantage over an individual who never leaves his chair in Downing Street except to kill grouse? Pah! Metternich and Pozzo know very well that Lord Roehampton knows them, and they set about affairs with him in a totally different spirit from that with which they circumvent some statesman who has issued from the barricades of Paris.'

Nor must it be forgotten that his debating society and the acquaintance which he had formed there, were highly beneficial to Endymion. Under the roof of Mr. Bertie Tremaine he enjoyed the opportunity of forming an acquaintance with a large body of young men of breeding, of high education, and full of ambition, that was a substitute for the society, becoming his youth and station, which he had lost by not going to the university.

With all these individuals, and with all their circles, Endymion was a favourite. No doubt his good looks, his mien—which was both cheerful and pensive—his graceful and quiet manners, all told in his favour, and gave him a good start, but further acquaintance always sustained the first impression. He was intelligent and well-informed, without any alarming originality, or too positive convictions. He listened not only with patience but with interest to all, and ever avoided controversy. Here are some of the elements of a man's popularity.

What was his intellectual reach, and what his real character, it was difficult at this time to decide. He was still very young, only on the verge of his twentieth year; and his character had no doubt been influenced, it might be suppressed, by the crushing misfortunes of his family. The influence of his sister was supreme over him. She had never reconciled herself to their fall. She had existed only on the solitary idea of regaining their position, and she had never omitted an occasion to impress upon him that he had a great mission, and that, aided by her devotion, he would fulfil it. What his own conviction on this subject was may be obscure. Perhaps he was organically of that cheerful and easy nature, which is content to enjoy the present, and not brood over the past. The future may throw light upon all these points; at present it may be admitted that the three years of seemingly bitter and mortifying adversity have not been altogether wanting in beneficial elements in the formation of his character and the fashioning of his future life.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Lady Montfort heard with great satisfaction from Mr. Neuchatel that Lord Roehampton was going to pay a visit to Hainault at Easter, and that he had asked himself. She playfully congratulated Mrs. Neuchatel on the subject, and spoke as if the affair was almost concluded. That lady, however, received the intimation with a serious, not to say distressed countenance. She said she should be grieved to lose Adriana under any circumstances; but if her marriage in time was a necessity, she trusted she might be united to some one who would not object to becoming a permanent inmate of their house. What she herself desired for her daughter was an union with some clergyman, and if possible, the rector of their own parish. But it was too charming a dream to realise. The rectory at Hainault was almost in the Park, and was the prettiest house in the world, with the most lovely garden. She herself much preferred it to the great mansion—and so on.

Lady Montfort stared at her with impatient astonishment,

and then said, 'Your daughter, Mrs. Neuchatel, ought to make an alliance which would place her at the head of society.'

'What a fearful destiny,' said Mrs. Neuchatel, 'for any one, but overwhelming for one who must feel the whole time that she occupies a position not acquired by her personal qualities!'

'Adriana is pretty,' said Lady Montfort. 'I think her more than pretty; she is highly accomplished and in every way pleasing. What can you mean, then, my dear madam, by supposing she would occupy a position not acquired by her personal qualities?'

Mrs. Neuchatel sighed and shook her head, and then said, 'We need not have any controversy on this subject. I have no reason to believe there is any foundation for my fears. We all like and admire Lord Roehampton. It is impossible not to admire and like him. So great a man, and yet so gentle and so kind, so unaffected—I would say, so unsophisticated; but he has never given the slightest intimation, either to me or her father, that he seriously admired Adriana, and I am sure if he had said anything to her she would have told us.'

'He is always here,' said Lady Montfort, 'and he is a man who used to go nowhere except for form. Besides, I know that he admires her, that he is in love with her, and I have not a doubt that he has invited himself to Hainault in order to declare his feelings to her.'

'How very dreadful!' exclaimed Mrs. Neuchatel. 'What are we to do?'

'To do!' said Lady Montfort; 'why, sympathise with his happiness, and complete it. You will have a son-in-law of whom you may well be proud, and Adriana a husband who, thoroughly knowing the world, and women, and himself, will be devoted to her; will be a guide and friend, a guide that will never lecture, and a friend who will always charm, for there is no companion in the world like him, and I think I ought to know,' added Lady Montfort, 'for I always tell him I was the last of his conquests, and I shall ever be grateful to him for his having spared to me so much of his society.'

'Adriana on this matter will decide for herself,' said Mrs. Neuchatel in a serious tone, and with a certain degree of dig-

nity. 'Neither Mr. Neuchatel, nor myself, have ever attempted to control her feelings in this respect.'

'Well, I am now about to see Adriana,' said Lady Montfort; 'I know she is at home. If I had not been obliged to go to Princedown, I would have asked you to let me pass Easter at Hainault myself.'

On this very afternoon, when Myra, who had been walking in Regent's Park with her brother, returned home, she found Adriana agitated, and really in tears.

'What is all this, dearest?' inquired her friend.

'I am too unhappy,' sobbed Adriana, and then she told Myra that she had had a visit from Lady Montfort, and all that had occurred in it. Lady Montfort had absolutely congratulated her on her approaching alliance with Lord Roehampton, and when she altogether disclaimed it, and expressed her complete astonishment at the supposition, Lady Montfort had told her she was not justified in giving Lord Roehampton so much encouragement and trifling with a man of his high character and position.

'Fancy my giving encouragement to Lord Roehampton!' exclaimed Adriana, and she threw her arms round the neck of the friend who was to console her.

'I agree with Lady Montfort,' said Myra, releasing herself with gentleness from her distressed friend. 'It may have been unconsciously on your part, but I think you have encouraged Lord Roehampton. He is constantly conversing with you, and he is always here, where he never was before, and, as Lady Montfort says, why should he have asked himself to pass the Easter at Hainault if it were not for your society?'

'He invited himself to Hainault, because he is so fond of papa,' said Adriana.

'So much the better, if he is to be your husband. That will be an additional element of domestic happiness.'

'O Myra! that you should say such things!' exclaimed Adriana.

'What things?'

'That I should marry Lord Roehampton.'

'I never said anything of the kind. Whom you should marry

is a question you must decide for yourself. All that I said was, that if you marry Lord Roehampton, it is fortunate he is so much liked by Mr. Neuchatel.'

'I shall not marry Lord Rochampton,' said Adriana with some determination, 'and if he has condescended to think of marrying me,' she continued, 'as Lady Montfort says, I think his motives are so obvious that if I felt for him any preference it would be immediately extinguished.'

'Ah! now you are going to ride your hobby, my dear Adriana. On that subject we never can agree; were I an heiress, I should have as little objection to be married for my fortune as my face. Husbands, as I have heard, do not care for the latter too long. Have more confidence in yourself, Adriana. If Lord Roehampton wishes to marry you, it is that he is pleased with you personally, that he appreciates your intelligence, your culture, your accomplishments, your sweet disposition, and your gentle nature. If in addition to these gifts you have wealth, and even great wealth, Lord Roehampton will not despise it, will not—for I wish to put it frankly—be uninfluenced by the circumstances, for Lord Roehampton is a wise man; but he would not marry you if he did not believe that you would make for him a delightful companion in life, that you would adorn his circle and illustrate his name.

'Ah! I see you are all in the plot against me,' said Adriana. 'I have no friend.'

'My dear Adriana, I think you are unreasonable; I could say even unkind.'

'Oh! pardon me, dear Myra,' said Adriana, 'but I really am so very unhappy.'

'About what? You are your own mistress in this matter. If you do not like to marry Lord Roehampton, nobody will attempt to control you. What does it signify what Lady Montfort says? or anybody else, except your own parents, who desire nothing but your happiness? I should never have mentioned Lord Roehampton to you had you not introduced the subject yourself. And all that I meant to say was, what I repeat, that your creed that no one can wish to marry you except for your wealth is a morbid conviction, and must lead to un-

happiness; that I do not believe that Lord Roehampton is influenced in his overture, if he make one, by any unworthy motive, and that any woman whose heart is disengaged should not lightly repudiate such an advance from such a man, by which, at all events, she should feel honoured.'

'But my heart is engaged,' said Adriana in an almost solemn tone.

'Oh! that is quite a different thing!' said Myra, turning pale.

'Yes!' said Adriana; 'I am devoted to one whose name I cannot now mention, perhaps will never mention, but I am devoted to him. Yes!' she added with fire, 'I am not altogether so weak a thing as the Lady Montforts and some other persons seem to think me—I can feel and decide for myself, and it shall never be said of me that I purchased love.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

THERE was to be no great party at Hainault; Lord Roehampton particularly wished that there should be no fine folks asked, and especially no ambassadors. All that he wanted was to enjoy the fresh air, and to ramble in the forest, of which he had heard so much, with the young ladies.

'And, by the by, Miss Ferrars,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'we must let what we were talking about the other day drop. Adriana has been with me quite excited about something Lady Montfort said to her. I soothed her and assured her she should do exactly as she liked, and that neither I nor her mother had any other wishes on such a subject than her own. The fact is, I answered Lady Montfort originally only half in earnest. If the thing might have happened, I should have been content—but it really never rested on my mind, because such matters must always originate with my daughter. Unless they come from her, with me they are mere fancies. But now I want you to help me in another matter, if not more grave, more business-like. My lord must be amused, although it is a family party. He likes his rubber: that we can manage. But there must be

two or three persons that he is not accustomed to meet, and yet who will interest him. Now, do you know, Miss Ferrars, whom I think of asking?'

'Not I, my dear sir.'

'What do you think of the colonel?' said Mr. Neuchatel, looking in her face with a rather laughing eye.

'Well, he is very agreeable,' said Myra, 'and many would think interesting, and if Lord Roehampton does not know him, I think he would do very well.'

'Well, but Lord Roehampton knows all about him,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'Well, that is an advantage,' said Myra.

'I do not know,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'Life is a very curious thing, eh, Miss Ferrars? One cannot ask one person to meet another even in one's own home, without going through a sum of moral arithmetic.'

'Is it so?' said Myra.

'Well, Miss Ferrars,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'I want your advice and I want your aid; but then it is a long story, at which I am rather a bad hand,' and Mr. Neuchatel hesitated. 'You know,' he said, suddenly resuming, 'you once asked me who Colonel Albert was.'

'But I do not ask you now,' said Myra, 'because I know.'

'Hah, hah!' exclaimed Mr. Neuchatel, much surprised.

'And what you want to know is,' continued Myra, 'whether Lord Roehampton would have any objection to meet Prince Florestan?'

'That is something; but that is comparatively easy. I think I can manage that. But when they meet—that is the point. But, in the first place, I should like very much to know how you became acquainted with the secret.'

'In a very natural way; my brother was my informant,' she replied.

'Ah! now you see,' continued Mr. Neuchatel, with a serious air, 'a word from Lord Roehampton in the proper quarter might be of vast importance to the prince. He has a large inheritance, and he has been kept out of it unjustly. Our house has done what we could for him, for his mother, Queen

Agrippina, was very kind to my father, and the house of Neuchatel never forgets its friends. But we want something else, we want the British Government to intimate that they will not disapprove of the restitution of the private fortune of the prince. I have felt my way with the premier; he is not favourable; he is prejudiced against the prince; and so is the cabinet generally; and yet all difficulties would vanish at a word from Lord Roehampton.'

'Well, this is a good opportunity for you to speak to him,' said Myra.

'Hem!' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'I am not so sure about that. I like Lord Roehampton, and, between ourselves, I wish he were first minister. He understands the Continent, and would keep things quiet. But, do you know, Miss Ferrars, with all his playful, good-tempered manner, as if he could not say a cross word or do an unkind act, he is a very severe man in business. Speak to him on business, and he is completely changed. His brows knit, he penetrates you with the terrible scrutiny of that deep-set eye; he is more than stately, he is austere. I have been up to him with deputations—the Governor of the Bank, and all the first men in the City, half of them M.P.s, and they trembled before him like aspens. No, it will not do for me to speak to him, it will spoil his visit. I think the way will be this; if he has no objection to meet the prince, we must watch whether the prince makes a favourable impression on him, and if that is the case, and Lord Roehampton likes him, what we must do next is this—*you* must speak to Lord Roehampton.'

'I!'

'Yes, Miss Ferrars, you. Lord Roehampton likes ladies. He is never austere to them, even if he refuses their requests, and sometimes he grants them. I thought first of Mrs. Neuchatel speaking to him, but my wife will never interfere in anything in which money is concerned; then I thought Adriana might express a hope when they were walking in the garden, but now that is all over; and so you alone remain. I have great confidence in you,' added Mr. Neuchatel, 'I think you would do it very well. Besides, my lord rather likes you, for

I have observed him often go and sit by you at parties, at our house.'

'Yes, he is very high-bred in that,' said Myra, gravely and rather sadly; 'and the fact of my being a dependent, I have no doubt, influences him.'

'We are all dependents in this house,' said Mr. Neuchatel with his sweetest smile; 'and I depend upon Miss Ferrars.'

Affairs on the whole went on in a promising manner. The weather was delightful, and Lord Roehampton came down to Hainault just in time for dinner, the day after their arrival, and in the highest spirits. He seemed to be enjoying a real holiday; body and mind were in a like state of expansion; he was enchanted with the domain; he was delighted with the mansion, everything pleased and gratified him, and he pleased and gratified everybody. The party consisted only of themselves, except one of the nephews, with whom indeed Lord Roehampton was already acquainted; a lively youth, a little on the turf, not too much, and this suited Lord Roehampton, who was a statesman of the old aristocratic school, still bred horses, and sometimes ran one, and in the midst of an European crisis could spare an hour to Newmarket. Perhaps it was his only affectation.

Mrs. Neuchatel, by whom he was seated, had the happy gift of conversation; but the party was of that delightful dimension, that it permitted talk to be general. Myra sate next to Lord Roehampton, and he often addressed her. He was the soul of the feast, and yet it is difficult to describe his conversation; it was a medley of graceful whim, interspersed now and then with a very short anecdote of a very famous person, or some deeply interesting reminiscence of some critical event. Every now and then he appealed to Adriana, who sate opposite to him in the round table, and she trusted that her irrepressible smiles would not be interpreted into undue encouragement.

Lord Roehampton had no objection to meet Prince Florestan, provided there were no other strangers, and the incognito was observed. He rather welcomed the proposal, observing he liked to know public men personally; so, you can judge of their calibre, which you never can do from books and news-

papers, or the oral reports of their creatures or their enemies. And so on the next day Colonel Albert was expected.

Lord Roehampton did not appear till luncheon; he had received so many boxes from Downing Street which required his attention. 'Business will follow one,' he said; 'yesterday I thought I had baffled it. I do not know what I shall do without my secretaries. I think I shall get you young ladies to assist me.'

'You cannot have better secretaries,' said Mr. Neuchatel; 'Miss Ferrars often helps me.'

Then what was to be done after luncheon? Would he ride, or would he drive? And where should they drive and ride to? But Lord Roehampton did not much care to drive, and was tired of riding. He would rather walk and ramble about Hainault. He wanted to see the place, and the forest and the fern, and perhaps hear one of those nightingales that they had talked of in Portland Place. But Mrs. Neuchatel did not care to walk, and Mr. Neuchatel, though it was a holiday in the City, had a great many letters to write, and so somehow or other it ended in Lord Roehampton and the two young ladies walking out together, and remaining so long and so late, that Mrs. Neuchatel absolutely contemplated postponing the dinner hour.

'We shall just be in time, dear Mrs. Neuchatel,' said Myra; 'Lord Roehampton has gone up to his room. We have heard a nightingale, and Lord Roehampton insisted upon our sitting on the trunk of a tree till it ceased—and it never ceased.'

Colonel Albert, who had arrived, was presented to Lord Roehampton before dinner. Lord Roehampton received him with stately courtesy. As Myra watched, not without interest, the proceeding, she could scarcely believe, as she marked the lofty grace and somewhat haughty mien of Lord Roehampton, that it could be the same being of frolic and fancy, and even tender sentiment, with whom she had been passing the preceding hours.

Colonel Albert sate next to Myra at dinner, and Lord Roehampton between Mrs. Neuchatel and her daughter. His manner was different to-day, not less pleased and pleasing, but certainly more restrained. He encouraged Mrs. Neuchatel to

occupy the chief part in conversation, and whispered to Adriana, who became somewhat uneasy; but the whispers mainly consisted of his delight in their morning adventures. When he remarked that it was one of the most agreeable days of his life, she became a little alarmed. Then he addressed Colonel Albert across the table, and said that he had heard from Mr. Neuchatel that the colonel had been in America, and asked some questions about public men, which brought him out. Colonel Albert answered with gentleness and modesty, never at any length, but in language which indicated, on all the matters referred to, thought and discrimination.

'I suppose their society is like the best society in Manchester?' said Lord Roehampton.

'It varies in different cities,' said Colonel Albert. 'In some there is considerable culture, and then refinement of life always follows.'

'Yes, but whatever they may be, they will always be colonial. What is colonial necessarily lacks originality. A country that borrows its language, its laws, and its religion, cannot have its inventive powers much developed. They got civilised very soon, but their civilisation was second-hand.'

'Perhaps their inventive powers may develop themselves in other ways,' said the prince. 'A nation has a fixed quantity of invention, and it will make itself felt.'

'At present,' said Lord Roehampton, 'the Americans, I think, employ their invention in imaginary boundary lines. They are giving us plenty of trouble now about Maine.'

After dinner they had some music; Lord Roehampton would not play whist. He insisted on comparing the voices of his companions with that of the nightingale of the morning. He talked a great deal to Adriana, and Colonel Albert, in the course of the evening much to Myra, and about her brother. Lord Roehampton more than once had wished to tell her, as he had already told Miss Neuchatel, how delightful had been their morning; but on every occasion he had found her engaged with the colonel.

'I rather like your prince,' he had observed to Mr. Neuchatel, as they came from the dining-room. 'He never speaks without

thinking; very reserved, I apprehend. They say, an inveterate conspirator.'

'He has had enough of that,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'I believe he wants to be quiet.'

'That class of man is never quiet,' said Lord Roehampton.

'But what can he do?' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'What can he not do? Half Europe is in a state of chronic conspiracy.'

'You must keep us right, my dear lord. So long as you are in Downing Street I shall sleep at nights.'

'Miss Ferrars,' said Lord Roehampton abruptly to Mr. Neuchatel, 'must have been the daughter of William Ferrars, one of my great friends in old days. I never knew it till to-day, and she did not tell me, but it flashed across me from something she said.'

'Yes, she is his daughter, and is in mourning for him at this moment. She has had sorrows,' said Mr. Neuchatel. 'I hope they have ceased. It was one of the happiest days of my life when she entered this family.'

'Ah!' said Lord Roehampton.

The next day, after they had examined the famous stud and stables, there was a riding party, and in the evening Colonel Albert offered to perform some American conjuring tricks, of which he had been speaking in the course of the day. This was a most wonderful performance, and surprised and highly amused everybody. Colonel Albert was the last person who they expected would achieve such marvels; he was so quiet, not to say grave. They could hardly credit that he was the same person as he poured floods of flowers over Myra from her own borrowed pocket-handkerchief, and without the slightest effort or embarrassment, robbed Lord Roehampton of his watch, and deposited it in Adriana's bosom. It was evident that he was a complete master of sleight-of-hand.

'Characteristic!' murmured Lord Roehampton to himself.

It was the day after this, that Myra being in the music room and alone, Lord Roehampton opened the door, looked in, and then said, 'Where is Miss Neuchatel?'

'I think she is on the terrace.'

'Let us try to find her, and have one of our pleasant strolls. I sadly want one, for I have been working very hard all this morning, and half the night.'

'I will be with you, Lord Roehampton, in a moment.'

'Do not let us have anybody else,' he said, as she left the room.

They were soon on the terrace, but Adriana was not there.

'We must find her,' said Lord Roehampton; 'you know her haunts. Ah! what a delight it is to be in this air and this scene after those dreadful boxes! I wish they would turn us out. I think they must soon.'

'Now for the first time,' said Myra, 'Lord Roehampton is not sincere.'

'Then you think me always sincere?' he replied.

'I have no reason to think you otherwise.'

'That is very true,' said Lord Roehampton, 'truer perhaps than you imagine.' Then rather abruptly he said, 'You know Colonel Albert very well?'

'Pretty well. I have seen him here frequently, and he is also a friend of my brother.'

'Ah! a friend of your brother.' Then, after a slight pause, he said, 'He is an interesting man.'

'I think so,' said Myra. 'You know all about him, of course.'

'Very good-looking.'

'Well, he looks unhappy, I think, and worn.'

'One is never worn when one is young,' said Lord Roehampton.

'He must have great anxieties and great sorrows,' said Myra. 'I cannot imagine a position more unfortunate than that of an exiled prince.'

'I can,' said Lord Roehampton. 'To have the feelings of youth and the frame of age.'

Myra was silent, one might say dumbfounded. She had just screwed herself up to the task which Mr. Neuchatel had imposed on her, and was about to appeal to the good offices of Lord Roehampton in favour of the prince, when he had indulged in a remark which was not only somewhat strange, but from the

manner in which it was introduced hardly harmonised with her purpose.

'Yes, I would give up everything,' said Lord Roehampton. 'I would even be an exile to be young; to hear that Miss Ferrars deems me interesting and good-looking, though worn.'

'What is going to happen?' thought Myra. 'Will the earth open to receive me?'

'You are silent,' said Lord Roehampton. 'You will not speak, you will not sigh, you will not give a glance of consolation or even pity. But I have spoken too much not to say more. Beautiful, fascinating being, let me at least tell you of my love.'

Myra could not speak, but put her left hand to her face. Gently taking her other hand, Lord Roehampton pressed it to his lips. 'From the first moment I met you, my heart was yours. It was love at first sight; indeed I believe in no other. I was amused with the projects of my friend, and I availed myself of them, but not unfairly. No one can accuse me of trifling with the affections of your sweet companion, and I must do her the justice to say that she did everything to convince me that she shrank from my attentions. But her society was an excuse to enjoy yours. I was an habitual visitor in town that I might cherish my love, and, dare I say it, I came down here to declare it. Do not despise it, dearest of women; it is not worthy of you, but it is not altogether undeserving. It is, as you kindly believed it,—it is sincere!'

CHAPTER XLV.

On the following day, Mr. Neuchatel had good-naturedly invited Endymion down to Hainault, and when he arrived there, a servant informed him that Miss Ferrars wished to see him in her room.

It was a long interview and an agitated one, and when she had told her tale, and her brother had embraced her, she sat for a time in silence, holding his hand, and intimating, that, for a while, she wished that neither of them should speak. Suddenly,

she resumed, and said, 'Now you know all, dear darling; it is so sudden, and so strange, that you must be almost as much astounded as gratified. What I have sighed for, and prayed for—what, in moments of inspiration, I have sometimes foreseen—has happened. Our degradation is over. I seem to breathe for the first time for many years. I see a career, ay, and a great one; and what is far more important, I see a career for you.'

'At this moment, dear Myra, think only of yourself.'

'You are myself,' she replied, rather quickly, 'never more so than at this moment;' and then she said in a tone more subdued, and even tender, 'Lord Roehampton has every quality and every accident of life that I delight in; he has intellect, eloquence, courage, great station and power; and, what I ought perhaps more to consider, though I do not, a sweet disposition and a tender heart. There is every reason why we should be happy—yes, very happy. I am sure I shall sympathise with him; perhaps, I may aid him; at least, he thinks so. He is the noblest of men. The world will talk of the disparity of our years; but Lord Roehampton says that he is really the younger of the two, and I think he is right. My pride, my intense pride, never permitted to me any levity of heart.'

'And when is it to happen?' inquired Endymion.

'Not immediately. I could not marry till a year had elapsed after our great sorrow; and it is more agreeable, even to him, that our union should be delayed till the session is over. He wants to leave England; go abroad; have a real holiday. He has always had a dream of travelling in Spain; well, we are to realise the dream. If we could get off at the end of July, we might go to Paris, and then to Madrid, and travel in Andalusia in the autumn, and then catch the packet at Gibraltar, and get home just in time for the November cabinets.'

'Dear Myra! how wonderful it all seems!' involuntarily exclaimed Endymion.

'Yes, but more wonderful things will happen. We have now got a lever to move the world. Understand, my dear Endymion, that nothing is to be announced at present. It will be known only to this family, and the Penruddocks. I am

bound to tell them, even immediately; they are friends that never can be forgotten. I have always kept up my correspondence with Mrs. Penruddock. Besides, I shall tell her in confidence, and she is perfectly to be depended on. I am going to ask my lord to let Mr. Penruddock marry us.'

'Oh! that will be capital,' said Endymion.

'There is another person, by the by, who must know it, at least my lord says so,' said Myra, 'and that is Lady Montfort; you have heard of that lady and her plans. Well, she must be told—at least, sooner or later. She will be annoyed, and she will hate me. I cannot help it; every one is hated by somebody.'

During the three months that had to elapse before the happy day, several incidents occurred that ought to be noted. In the first place, Lady Montfort, though disappointed and very much astonished, bore the communication from Lord Roehampton more kindly than he had anticipated. Lord Roehampton made it by letter, and his letters to women were more happy even than his despatches to ministers, and they were unrivalled. He put the matter in the most skilful form. Myra had been born in a social position not inferior to his own, and was the daughter of one of his early political friends. He did not dilate too much on her charms and captivating qualities, but sufficiently for the dignity of her who was to become his wife. And then he confessed to Lady Montfort how completely his heart and happiness were set on Lady Roehampton being welcomed becomingly by his friends; he was well aware, that in these matters things did not always proceed as one could wish, but this was the moment, and this the occasion, to test a friend, and he believed he had the dearest, the most faithful, the most fascinating, and the most powerful in Lady Montfort.

'Well, we must put the best face upon it,' exclaimed that lady; 'he was always romantic. But, as he says, or thinks, what is the use of friends if they do not help you in a scrape?'

So Lady Montfort made the acquaintance of Myra, and welcomed her new acquaintance cordially. She was too fine a judge of beauty and deportment not to appreciate them, even when a little prejudice lurked behind. She was amused also,

and a little gratified, by being in the secret; presented Myra with a rare jewel, and declared that she should attend the wedding; though when the day arrived, she was at Princedown, and could not, unfortunately, leave her lord.

About the end of June, a rather remarkable paragraph appeared in the journal of society:

'We understand that His Royal Highness Prince Florestan, who has been for some little time in this country, has taken the mansion in Carlton Gardens, recently occupied by the Marquis of Katterfelto. The mansion is undergoing very considerable repairs, but it is calculated that it will be completed in time for the reception of His Royal Highness by the end of the autumn; His Royal Highness has taken the extensive moors of Dinniewhiskie for the coming season.'

In the earlier part of July, the approaching alliance of the Earl of Roehampton with Miss Ferrars, the only daughter of the late Right Honourable William Pitt Ferrars, of Hurstley Hall, in the county of Berks, was announced, and great was the sensation, and innumerable the presents instantly ordered.

But on no one did the announcement produce a greater effect than on Zenobia; that the daughter of her dearest friend should make so interesting and so distinguished an alliance was naturally most gratifying to her. She wrote to Myra a most impassioned letter, as if they had only separated yesterday, and a still longer and more fervent one to Lord Roehampton; Zenobia and he had been close friends in other days, till he wickedly changed his politics, and was always in office and Zenobia always out. This was never to be forgiven. But the bright lady forgot all this now, and sent to Myra the most wondrous bracelet of precious stones, in which the word 'Souvenir' was represented in brilliants, rubies, and emeralds.

'For my part,' said Myra to Endymion, 'my most difficult task are the bridesmaids. I am to have so many, and know so few. I feel like a recruiting sergeant. I began with Adriana, but my lord helps me very much out of his family, and says, when we have had a few family dinners, all will be right.'

Endymion did not receive the banter he expected at the office. The event was too great for a jest. Seymour Hicks,

with a serious countenance, said Ferrars might get anywhere now,—all the ministerial receptions of course. Jawett said there would be no ministerial receptions soon; they were degrading functions. Clear-headed Trenchard congratulated him quietly, and said, 'I do not think you will stay much longer among us, but we shall always remember you with interest.'

At last the great day arrived, and at St. George's, Hanover Square, the Right Honourable the Earl of Roehampton, K.G., was united to Miss Ferrars. Mr. Penruddock joined their hands. His son Nigel had been invited to assist him, but did not appear, though Myra had written to him. The great world assembled in force, and Endymion observed Mr. and Mrs. Rodney and Imogene in the body of the church. After the ceremony there was an entertainment in Portland Place, and the world ate ortolans and examined the presents. These were remarkable for number and splendour. Myra could not conceal her astonishment at possessing so many friends; but it was the fashion for all Lord Roehampton's acquaintance to make him offerings, and to solicit his permission to present gifts to his bride. Mr. Neuchatel placed on her brow a diamond tiara, and Mrs. Neuchatel encircled her neck with one of her diamond necklaces. 'I should like to give the other one to Adriana,' she observed, 'but Adriana says that nothing will ever induce her to wear jewels.' Prince Florestan presented Lady Roehampton with a vase which had belonged to his mother, and which had been painted by Boucher for Marie Antoinette. It was matchless, and almost unique.

Not long after this, Lord Beaumaris, with many servants and many guns, took Waldershare and Endymion down with him to Scotland.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The end of the season is a pang to society. More hopes have been baffled than realised. There is something melancholy in the last ball, though the music ever seems louder, and the lights more glaring than usual. Or it may be, the last entertainment

is that hecatomb they call a wedding breakfast, which celebrates the triumph of a rival. That is pleasant. Society, to do it justice, struggles hard to revive in other scenes the excitement that has expired. It sails to Cowes, it scuds to bubbling waters in the pine forests of the continent, it stalks even into Scotland; but it is difficult to restore the romance that has been rudely disturbed, and to gather again together the threads of the intrigue that have been lost in the wild flight of society from that metropolis, which is now described as 'a perfect desert'—that is to say, a park or so, two or three squares, and a dozen streets where society lives; where it dines, and dances, and blackballs, and bets, and spouts.

But to the world in general, the mighty million, to the professional classes, to all men of all business whatever, the end of the season is the beginning of carnival. It is the fulfilment of the dream over which they have been brooding for ten months, which has sustained them in toil, lightened anxiety, and softened even loss. It is air, it is health, it is movement, it is liberty, it is nature—earth, sea, lake, moor, forest, mountain, and river. From the heights of the Engadine to Margate Pier, there is equal rapture, for there is an equal cessation of routine.

Few enjoy a holiday more than a young clerk in a public office, who has been bred in a gentle home, and enjoyed in his boyhood all the pastimes of gentlemen. Now he is ever toiling, with an uncertain prospect of annual relaxation, and living hardly. Once on a time, at the paternal hall, he could shoot, or fish, or ride, every day of his life, as a matter of course; and now, what would he not give for a good day's sport? Such thoughts had frequently crossed the mind of Endymion when drudging in London during the autumn, and when all his few acquaintances were away. It was, therefore, with no ordinary zest that he looked forward to the unexpected enjoyment of an unstinted share of some of the best shooting in the United Kingdom. And the relaxation and the pastime came just at the right moment, when the reaction, from all the excitement attendant on the marvellous change in his sister's position, would have made him, deprived of her consoling society, doubly sensible of his isolated position.

It so happened that the moors of Lord Beaumaris were contiguous to the celebrated shootings of Dinniewhiskie, which were rented by Prince Florestan, and the opportunity now offered which Waldershare desired of making the acquaintance of the prince in an easy manner. Endymion managed this cleverly. Waldershare took a great fancy to the prince. He sympathised with him, and imparted to Endymion his belief that they could not do a better thing than devote their energies to a restoration of his rights. Lord Beaumaris, who hated foreigners, but who was always influenced by Waldershare, also liked the prince, and was glad to be reminded by his mentor that Florestan was half an Englishman, not to say a whole one, for he was an Eton boy. What was equally influential with Lord Beaumaris was, that the prince was a fine shot, and indeed a consummate sportsman, and had in his manners that calm which is rather unusual with foreigners, and which is always pleasing to an English aristocrat. So in time they became intimate, sported much together, and visited each other at their respective quarters. The prince was never alone. What the county paper described as distinguished foreigners were perpetually paying him visits, long or short, and it did not generally appear that these visits were influenced by a love of sport. One individual, who arrived shortly after the prince, remained, and, as was soon known, was to remain permanently. This was a young gentleman, short and swarthy, with flashing eyes and a black moustache, known by the name of the Duke of St. Angelo, but who was really only a cadet of that illustrious house. The Duke of St. Angelo took the management of the household of the prince—was evidently the controller; servants trembled at his nod, and he rode any horse he liked; he invited guests, and arranged the etiquette of the interior. He said one day very coolly to Waldershare: 'I observe that Lord Beaumaris and his friends never rise when the prince moves.'

'Why should we?'

'His rank is recognised and guaranteed by the Treaty of Vienna,' said the Duke of St. Angelo, with an arrogant air.

'His princely rank,' replied Waldershare, 'but not his royalty.'

'That is a mere refinement,' said the duke contemptuously.

'On the contrary, a clear distinction, and specifically made in the treaty. I do not think the prince himself would desire such a ceremony, and let me recommend you, duke,' added Waldershare, 'not to go out of your way to insist on these points. They will not increase the prince's popularity.'

'The time will come, and before long, when the Treaty of Vienna, with its clear distinctions, will be at the bottom of the Red Sea,' said the Duke of St. Angelo, 'and then no one will sit when His Majesty rises.'

'Amen!' said Waldershare. 'All diplomacy since the Treaty of Utrecht seems to me to be fiddle-faddle, and the country rewarded the great man who made that treaty by an attainder.'

Endymion returned to town towards the end of September, Waldershare went to Paris, and Lord Beaumaris and the prince, who had become intimate, repaired together to Conington, the seat of Lord Beaumaris, to kill pheasants. Even the Rodneys, who had gone to the Rhine this year, had not returned. Endymion had only the society of his fellow clerks. He liked Trenchard, who was acute, full of official information, and of gentle breeding. Still it must be confessed that Endymion felt the change in his society. Seymour Hicks was hardly a fit successor to Waldershare, and Jawett's rabid abstractions on government were certainly not so interesting as *la haute politique* of the Duke of St. Angelo. Were it not for the letters which he constantly received from his sister, he would have felt a little despondent. As it was, he renewed his studies in his pleasant garret, trained himself in his French and German, and got up several questions for the Union.

The month seemed very long, but it was not unprofitably spent. The Rodneys were still absent. They had not returned as they had intended direct to England, but had gone to Paris to meet Mr. Waldershare.

At the end of October there was a semi-official paragraph announcing the approaching meeting of the Cabinet, and the movements of its members. Some were in the north, and some were in the south; some were killing the last grouse, and some, placed in green ridings, were blazing in battues. But all were

to be at their post in ten days, and there was a special notification that intelligence had been received of the arrival of Lord and Lady Roehampton at Gibraltar.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Lady Roehampton, in her stately mansion in St. James' Square, found life very different from what she had experienced in her Andalusian dream. For three months she had been the constant companion of one of the most fascinating of men, whose only object had been to charm and delight her. And in this he had entirely succeeded. From the moment they arrived in London, however, they seemed to be separated, and although when they met, there was ever a sweet smile and a kind and playful word for her, his brow, if not oppressed with care, was always weighty with thought. Lord Roehampton was little at his office; he worked in a spacious chamber on the ground floor of his private residence, and which was called the Library, though its literature consisted only of Hansard, volumes of state papers, shelves of treatises, and interminable folios of parliamentary reports. He had not been at home a week before the floor of the apartment was literally covered with red boxes, all containing documents requiring attention, and which messengers were perpetually bringing or carrying away. Then there were long meetings of the Cabinet almost daily, and daily visits from ambassadors and foreign ministers, which prevented the transaction of the current business, and rendered it necessary that Lord Roehampton should sit up late in his cabinet, and work sometimes nearly till the hours of dawn. There had been of course too some arrears of business, for secretaries of state cannot indulge with impunity in Andalusian dreams, but Lord Roehampton was well served. His under-secretaries of state were capable and experienced men, and their chief had not been altogether idle in his wanderings. He had visited Paris, and the capital of France in those days was the capital of diplomacy. The visit of Lord Roehampton had settled some questions which

might have lingered for years, and had given him that opportunity of personal survey which to a statesman is invaluable.

Although it was not the season, the great desert had, comparatively speaking, again become peopled. There were many persons in town, and they all called immediately on Lady Roehampton. The ministerial families and the diplomatic corps alone form a circle, but there is also a certain number of charming people who love London in November, and lead there a wondrous pleasant life of real amusement, until their feudal traditions and their domestic duties summon them back to their Christmas homes.

Lord and Lady Roehampton gave constant dinners, and after they had tried two or three, he expressed his wish to his wife that she should hold a small reception after these dinners. He was a man of great tact, and he wished to launch his wife quietly and safely on the social ocean. 'There is nothing like practising before Christmas, my love,' he would say; 'you will get your hand in, and be able to hold regular receptions in the spring.' And he was quite right. The dinners became the mode, and the assemblies were eagerly appreciated. The Secretary of the Treasury whispered to an Under-Secretary of State,—'This marriage was a *coup*. We have got another house.'

Myra had been a little anxious about the relations between Lord Roehampton and her brother. She felt, with a woman's instinct, that her husband might not be overpleased by her devotion to Endymion, and she could not resist the conviction that the disparity of age which is easily forgotten in a wife, and especially in a wife who adores you, assumes a different, and somewhat distasteful character, when a great statesman is obliged to recognise it in the shape of a boyish brother-in-law. But all went right, for the sweetness of Lord Roehampton's temper was inexhaustible. Endymion had paid several visits to St. James' Square before Myra could seize the opportunity, for which she was ever watching, to make her husband and her brother acquainted.

'And so you are one of us,' said Lord Roehampton, with his sweetest smile and in his most musical tone, 'and in office. We must try to give you a lift.' And then he asked Endymion

who was his chief, and how he liked him, and then he said, 'A good deal depends on a man's chief. I was under your grandfather when I first entered parliament, and I never knew a pleasanter man to do business with. He never made difficulties; he always encouraged one. A younker likes that.'

Lady Roehampton was desirous of paying some attention to all those who had been kind to her brother; particularly Mr. Waldershare and Lord Beaumaris—and she wished to invite them to her house. 'I am sure Waldershare would like to come,' said Endymion, 'but Lord Beaumaris, I know, never goes anywhere, and I have myself heard him say he never would.'

'Yes, my lord was telling me Lord Beaumaris was quite *farouche*, and it is feared that we may lose him. That would be sad,' said Myra, 'for he is powerful.'

'I should like very much if you could give me a card for Mr. Trenchard,' said Endymion; 'he is not in society, but he is quite a gentleman.'

'You shall have it, my dear. I have always liked Mr. Trenchard, and I dare say, some day or other, he may be of use to you.'

The Neuchatels were not in town, but Myra saw them frequently, and Mr. Neuchatel often dined in St. James' Square—but the ladies always declined every invitation of the kind. They came up from Hainault to see Myra, but looked as if nothing but their great affection would prompt such a sacrifice, and seemed always pining for Arcadia. Endymion, however, not unfrequently continued his Sunday visits to Hainault, to which Mr. Neuchatel had given him a general welcome. This young gentleman, indeed, soon experienced a considerable change in his social position. Invitations flocked to him, and often from persons whom he did not know, and who did not even know him. He went by the name of Lady Roehampton's brother, and that was a sufficient passport.

'We are trying to get up a carpet dance to-night,' said Belinda to a fair friend. 'What men are in town?'

'Well, there is Mr. Waldershare, who has just left me.'

'I have asked him.'

'Then there is Lord Willesden and Henry Grantley—I know

they are passing through town—and there is the new man, Lady Roehampton's brother.'

'I will send to Lord Willesden and Henry Grantley immediately, and perhaps you will send a card, which I will write here, for me to the new man.'

And in this way Mr. Ferrars soon found that he was what is called 'everywhere.'

One of the most interesting acquaintances that Lady Roehampton made was a colleague of her husband, and that was Mr. Sidney Wilton, once the intimate friend of her father. He had known herself and her brother when they were children, indeed from the cradle. Mr. Sidney Wilton was in the perfection of middle life, and looked young for his years. He was tall and pensive, and naturally sentimental, though a long political career, for he had entered the House of Commons for the family borough the instant he was of age, had brought to this susceptibility a salutary hardness. Although somewhat alienated from the friend of his youth by the course of affairs, for Mr. Sidney Wilton had followed Lord Roehampton, while Mr. Ferrars had adhered to the Duke of Wellington, he had not neglected Ferrars in his fall, but his offers of assistance, frankly and generously made, had been coldly though courteously rejected, and no encouragement had been given to the maintenance of their once intimate acquaintance.

Mr. Sidney Wilton was much struck by the appearance of Lady Roehampton. He tried to compare the fulfilment of her promise with the beautiful and haughty child whom he used to wonder her parents so extravagantly spoiled. Her stature was above the average height of women and finely developed and proportioned. But it was in the countenance—in the pellucid and commanding brow, the deep splendour of her dark blue eyes softened by long lashes, her short upper lip, and the rich profusion of her dark chestnut hair—that his roused memory recalled the past; and he fell into a mood of agitated contemplation.

The opportunities which he enjoyed of cultivating her society were numerous, and Mr. Wilton missed none. He was frequently her guest, and being himself the master of a splendid

establishment, he could offer her a hospitality which every one appreciated. Lord Roehampton was peculiarly his political chief, and they had always been socially intimate. As the trusted colleague of her husband—as one who had known her in her childhood, and as himself a man singularly qualified, by his agreeable conversation and tender and deferential manner, to make his way with women—Mr. Sidney Wilton had no great difficulty, particularly in that happy demi-season which precedes Christmas, in establishing relations of confidence and intimacy with Lady Roehampton.

The cabinets were over: the government had decided on their measures, and put them in a state of preparation, and they were about to disperse for a month. The seat of Lord Roehampton was in the extreme north of England, and a visit to it was inconvenient at this moment, and especially at this season. The department of Lord Roehampton was very active at this time, and he was unwilling that the first impression by his wife of her future home should be experienced at a season little favourable to the charms of a northern seat. Mr. Sidney Wilton was the proprietor of the most beautiful and the most celebrated villa in England; only twenty miles from town, seated on a wooded crest of the swan-crowned Thames, with gardens of delight, and woods full of pheasants, and a terrace that would have become a court, glancing over a wide expanse of bower and glade, studded with bright halls and delicate steeples, and the smoke of rural homes.

It was arranged that Lord and Lady Roehampton should pass their Christmas at Gaydene with Mr. Sidney Wilton, stay as long as they liked, go where they chose, but make it their head-quarters. It was a most successful visit; for a great deal of business was done, as well as pleasure enjoyed. The ambassadors, who are always a little uneasy at Christmas when everybody is away, and themselves without country homes, were all invited down for that week. Lord Roehampton used to give them audiences after the shooting parties. He thought it was a specific against their being too long. He used to say, 'The first dinner-bell often brings things to a point.' After Christmas there was an ever-varying stream of company, chiefly official and

parliamentary. The banquet and the battue did not always settle the business, the clause, or the schedule, which the guests often came down to Gaydene ostensibly to accomplish, but they sent men back to town with increased energy and good humour, and kept the party in heart. Towards the end of the month the premier came down, and for him the Blue Ribbon Covert had been reserved, though he really cared little for sport. It was an eighteenth century tradition that knights of the garter only had been permitted to shoot this choice preserve, but Mr. Sidney Wilton, in this advanced age, did not of course revive such an ultra-exclusive practice, and he was particular in arranging the party to include Mr. Jorrocks. This was a Radical member to whom considerable office had been given at the reconstruction of 1835, when it was necessary that the Whigs should conciliate the Mountain. He was a pretentious, underbred, half-educated man, fluent with all the commonplaces of middle-class ambition, which are humorously called democratic opinions, but at heart a sycophant of the aristocracy. He represented, however, a large and important constituency, and his promotion was at first looked upon as a masterpiece of management. The Mountain, who knew Jorrocks by heart, and felt that they had in their ranks men in every sense his superior, and that he could be no representative of their intelligence and opinions, and so by degrees prepare for their gradual admission to the sacred land, at first sulked over the promotion of their late companion, and only did not publicly deride it from the feeling that by so doing they might be playing the game of the ministry. At the time of which we are writing, having become extremely discontented and wishing to annoy the government, they even affected dissatisfaction at the subordinate position which Jorrocks occupied in the administration, and it was generally said—had become indeed the slang of the party—that the test of the sincerity of the ministry to Liberal principles was to put Jorrocks in the cabinet. The countenance of the premier when this choice programme was first communicated to him was what might have been expected had he learnt of the sudden descent upon this isle of an invading force, and the Secretary of the Treasury whispered in confidence to one or two leaders of the Mountain,

'that if they did not take care they would upset the government.'

'That is exactly what we want to do,' was the reply.

So it will be seen that the position of the ministry, previous to the meeting of parliament in 1839, was somewhat critical. In the meantime, its various members, who knew their man, lavished every practicable social attention on Jorrocks. The dinners they gave him were doubled; they got their women to call on his women; and Sidney Wilton, a member of an illustrious garter family, capped the climax by appointing him one of the party to shoot the Blue Ribbon Covert.

Mr. Wilton had invited Endymion to Gaydene, and, as his stay there could only be brief, had even invited him to repeat the visit. He was, indeed, unaffectedly kind to one whom he remembered so young, and was evidently pleased with him.

One evening, a day or two before the break-up of the party, while some charming Misses Playfellow, with an impudent brother, who all lived in the neighbourhood, were acting charades, Mr. Wilton said to Lady Roehampton, by whose side he was sitting in the circle—

'I have had a very busy morning about my office. There is to be a complete revolution in it. The whole system is to be reconstructed; half the present people are to be pensioned off, and new blood is to be introduced. It struck me that this might be an opening for your brother. He is in the public service—that is something; and as there are to be so many new men, there will be no jealousy as to his promotion. If you will speak to him about it, and he likes it, I will appoint him one of the new clerks; and then, if he also likes it, he shall be my private secretary. That will give him position, and be no mean addition to his income, you know, if we last—but that depends, I suppose, on Mr. Jorrocks.'

Lady Roehampton communicated all this to her brother on her return to London. 'It is exactly what I wished,' she said. 'I wanted you to be private secretary to a cabinet minister, and if I were to choose any one, except, of course, my lord, it would be Mr. Wilton. He is a perfect gentleman, and was dear papa's friend. I understand you will have three hundred a year to

begin with, and the same amount as his secretary. You ought to be able to live with ease and propriety on six hundred a year —and this reminds me of what I have been thinking of before we went to Gaydene. I think now you ought to have a more becoming residence. The Rodneys are good people, I do not doubt, and I dare say we shall have an opportunity of proving our sense of their services; but they are not exactly the people that I care for you to live with, and, at any rate, you cannot reside any longer in a garret. I have taken some chambers in the Albany, therefore, for you, and they shall be my contribution to your housekeeping. They are not badly furnished, but they belonged to an old general officer, and are not very new-fashioned; but we will go together and see them to-morrow, and I dare say I shall soon be able to make them *comme il faut.*'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

This considerable rise in the life of Endymion, after the first excitement occasioned by its announcement to him had somewhat subsided, was not contemplated by him with unmixed feelings of satisfaction. It seemed to terminate many relations of life, the value of which he had always appreciated, but which now, with their impending conclusion, he felt, and felt keenly, had absolutely contributed to his happiness. There was no great pang in quitting his fellow-clerks, except Trenchard, whom he greatly esteemed. But poor little Warwick Street had been to him a real home, if unvarying kindness, and sedulous attention, and the affection of the eyes and heart, as well as of the mouth, can make a hearth. He hoped he might preserve the friendship of Waldershare, which their joint intimacy with the prince would favour; but still he could hardly flatter himself that the delightful familiarity of their past lives could subsist. Endymion sighed, and then he sighed again. He felt sad. Because he was leaving the humble harbour of refuge, the entrance to which, even in the darkest hour of his fallen fortunes, was thought somewhat of an indignity, and was about to assume a position which would not have altogether misbecome the earliest

expectations of his life? That seems unreasonable; but mankind, fortunately, are not always governed by reason, but by sentiment, and often by very tender sentiment.

When Endymion, sitting in his little room, analysed his feelings, he came to the conclusion that his sadness was occasioned by his having to part from Imogene. It often requires an event in life, and an unexpected one, to make us clearly aware of the existence of feelings which have long influenced us. Never having been in a position in which the possibility of uniting his fate to another could cross his mind for a moment, he had been content with the good fortune which permitted a large portion of his life to be passed in the society of a woman who, unconsciously both to him and to herself, had fascinated him. The graceful child who, four or five years ago, had first lit him to his garret, without losing anything of her rare and simple ingenuousness, had developed into a beautiful and accomplished woman. There was a strong resemblance between Imogene and her sister, but Imogene was a brunette. Her countenance indicated far more intellect and character than that of Sylvia. Her brow was delicately pencilled and finely arched, and her large dark eyes gleamed with a softness and sweetness of expression, which were irresistibly attractive, and seemed to indicate sympathy with everything that was good and beautiful. Her features were not so regular as her sister's; but when she smiled, her face was captivating.

Endymion had often listened, half with fondness and half with scepticism, to Waldershare dilating, according to his wont, on the high character and qualities of Imogene, whom he persisted in believing he was preparing for a great career. 'How it will come about I cannot say,' he would remark; 'but it will come. If my legitimate sovereign were on the throne, and I in the possession of my estates, which were graciously presented by the usurper to the sausage-makers, or some other choice middle-class corporation, I would marry her myself. But that is impossible. That would only be asking her to share my ruin. I want her to live in palaces, and perhaps, in my decline of life, make me her librarian, like Casanova. I should be content to dine in her hall every day beneath the salt, and see her enter

with her state, amid the flourish of trumpets.' And now, strange to say, Endymion was speculating on the fate of Imogene, and, as he thought, in a more practical spirit. Six hundred a year, he thought, was not a very large income; but it was an income, and one which a year ago he never contemplated possessing until getting grey in the public service. Why not realise perfect happiness at once? He could conceive no bliss greater than living with Imogene in one of those little villas, even if semi-detached, which now are numbered by tens of thousands, and which were then beginning to shoot out their suburban antennæ in every direction of our huge metropolis. He saw her in his mind's eye in a garden of perpetual sunshine, breathing of mignonette and bright with roses, and waiting for him as he came down from town and his daily labours, in the cheap and convenient omnibus. What a delightful companion to welcome him! How much to tell her, and how much to listen to! And then their evenings with a delicious book or some delightful music! What holidays, too, of romantic adventure! The vine-clad Rhine, perhaps Switzerland; at any rate, the quaint old cities of Flanders, and the winding valley of the Meuse. They could live extremely well on six hundred a year; yes, with all the real refinements of existence. And all this genuine happiness was to be sacrificed for utterly fantastic and imaginary gratifications, which, if analysed, would be found only to be efforts to amuse and astonish others.

It did not yet occur to Endymion that his garden could not always be sunshiny; that cares crop up in villas, even semi-detached, as well as joys; that he would have children, and perhaps too many; that they would be sick, and that doctors' bills would soon put a stop to romantic excursions; that his wife would become exhausted with nursing and clothing and teaching them; that she herself would become an invalid, and moped to death; that his resources would every day bear a less proportion to his expenditure; and that wanting money, he would return too often from town a harassed husband to a jaded wife!

Mr. Rodney and Sylvia were at Conington on a visit to Lord Beaumaris, hunting. It was astonishing how Sylvia had ridden

to the hounds, mounted on the choicest steeds, and in a scarlet habit which had been presented to her by Mr. Vigo. She had created quite an enthusiasm in the field, and Lord Beaumaris was proud of his guests. When Endymion parted with his sister at the Albany, where they had been examining his rooms, he had repaired to Warwick Street, with some expectation that the Rodneys would have returned from Conington, and he intended to break to his host the impending change in his life. The Rodneys, however, had not arrived, and so he ascended to his room, where he had been employed in arranging his books and papers, and indulging in the reverie which we have indicated. When he came downstairs, wishing to inquire about the probable arrival of his landlord, Endymion knocked at the door of the parlour where they used to assemble, and on entering, found Imogene writing.

'How do you do, Mr. Ferrars?' she said, rising. 'I am writing to Sylvia. They are not returning as soon as they intended, and I am to go down to Conington by an early train to-morrow.'

'I wanted to see Mr. Rodney,' said Endymion moodily.

'Can I write anything to him, or tell him anything?' said Imogene.

'No,' continued Endymion in a melancholy tone. 'I can tell you what I wanted to say. But you must be occupied now, going away, and unexpectedly, to-morrow. It seems to me that every one is going away.'

'Well, we have lost the prince, certainly,' said Imogene, 'and I doubt whether his rooms will be ever let again.'

'Indeed!' said Endymion.

'Well, I only know what Mr. Waldershare tells me. He says that Mr. Rodney and Mr. Vigo have made a great speculation, and gained a great deal of money; but Mr. Rodney never speaks to me of such matters, nor indeed does Sylvia. I am myself very sorry that the prince has gone, for he interested me much.'

'Well, I should think Mr. Rodney would not be very sorry to get rid of me then,' said Endymion.

'O Mr. Ferrars! why should you say or think such things?

I am sure that my brother and sister, and indeed every one in this house, always consider your comfort and welfare before any other object.'

'Yes,' said Endymion, 'you have all been most kind to me, and that makes me more wretched at the prospect of leaving you.'

'But there is no prospect of that?'

'A certainty, Imogene; there is going to be a change in my life,' and then he told her all.

'Well,' said Imogene, 'it would be selfish not to be happy at what I hear; but though I hope I am happy, I need not be joyful. I never used to be nervous, but I am afraid I am getting so. All these great changes rather shake me. This adventure of the prince—as Mr. Waldershare says, it is history. Then Miss Myra's great marriage, and your promotion—although they are exactly what we used to dream about, and wished a fairy would accomplish, and somehow felt that, somehow or other, they must happen—yet now they have occurred, one is almost as astounded as delighted. We certainly have been very happy in Warwick Street, at least I have been, all living as it were together. But where shall we be this time next year? All scattered, and perhaps not even the Rodneys under this roof. I know not how it is, but I dread leaving the roof where one has been happy.'

'Oh! you know you must leave it one day or other, Imogene. You are sure to marry; that you cannot avoid.'

'Well, I am not by any means sure about that,' said Imogene. 'Mr. Waldershare, in educating me, as he says, as a princess, has made me really neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor even that coarser but popular delicacy never forgotten. I could not unite my life with a being who was not refined in mind and in manners, and the men of my class in life, who are the only ones after all who might care to marry me, shock my taste. I am ashamed to say so. I am not sure it is not wicked to think it even; but so it is.'

'Why do you not marry Waldershare?' said Endymion.

'That would be madness! I do not know any alliance that could prove more unfortunate. Mr. Waldershare must never marry. All people of imagination, they say, are difficult to live with; but a person who consists solely of imagination, like Mr.

Waldershare, who has indeed no other attribute—before a year was past, married, he would fly to the desert or to La Trappe, commit terrible scandals from mere weariness of feeling, write pasquinades against the wife of his bosom, and hold us both up to the fierce laughter of the world. No, no; he is the best, the dearest, and the most romantic of friends; tender as a father, and sometimes as wise, for genius can be everything. He is going to rise early to-morrow, which he particularly dislikes, because he will not let me go to the station alone; though I tell him, as I often tell him, those are the becoming manners of my class.'

'But you might meet a person of the refinement you require,' said Endymion, 'with a moderate and yet a sufficient income, who would not be unworthy of you.'

'I doubt it,' said Imogene.

'But, do not doubt it, dear Imogene,' said Endymion, advancing; 'such charms as yours, both of body and of mind, such a companion in life, so refined, so accomplished, and yet endowed with such clear sense, and such a sweet disposition—believe me '——

But at this moment a splendid equipage drove up to the door, with powdered footmen and long canes behind, and then a terrible rap, like the tattoo of a field-marshal.

'Good gracious! what is all this?' exclaimed Imogene.

'It is my sister,' said Endymion, blushing; 'it is Lady Roehampton.'

'I must go to her myself,' said Imogene; 'I cannot have the servant attend upon your sister.'

Endymion remained silent and confused. Imogene was some little time at the carriage-door, for Lady Roehampton had inquiries to make after Sylvia and other courteous things to say, and then Imogene returned, and said to Endymion, 'Lady Roehampton wishes you to go with her directly on some particular business.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

ENDYMION liked his new official life very much. Whitehall was a great improvement on Somerset House, and he had sufficient experience of the civil service to duly appreciate the advantage of being permanently quartered in one of the chief departments of the state, instead of obscurely labouring in a subordinate office, with a limited future, and detached from all the keenly interesting details of public life. But it was not this permanent and substantial advantage which occasioned him such lively and such novel pleasure, as the fact of his being a private secretary, and a private secretary to a cabinet minister.

The relations between a minister and his secretary are, or at least should be, among the finest that can subsist between two individuals. Except the married state, there is none in which so great a degree of confidence is involved, in which more forbearance ought to be exercised, or more sympathy ought to exist. There is usually in the relation an identity of interest, and that of the highest kind; and the perpetual difficulties, the alternations of triumph and defeat, develop devotion. A youthful secretary will naturally feel some degree of enthusiasm for his chief, and a wise minister will never stint his regard for one in whose intelligence and honour he finds he can place confidence.

There never was a happier prospect of these relations being established on the most satisfactory basis than in the instance of Endymion and his new master. Mr. Sidney Wilton was a man of noble disposition, fine manners, considerable culture, and was generally gracious. But he was disposed to be more than gracious to Endymion, and when he found that our young friend had a capacity for work—that his perception was quick and clear—that he wrote with facility—never made difficulties—was calm, sedulous, and patient, the interest which Mr. Wilton took in him as the son of William Ferrars, and, we must add, as the brother of Lady Roehampton, became absorbed in the personal regard which the minister soon entertained for his secretary. Mr. Wilton found a pleasure in forming the mind of Endymion to the consideration and comprehension of public affairs; he

spoke to him both of men and things without reserve; revealed to him the characters of leading personages on both sides, illustrated their antecedents, and threw light upon their future; taught him the real condition of parties in parliament, rarely to be found in newspapers; and finally, when he was sufficiently initiated, obtained for his secretary a key for his cabinet boxes, which left little of the business of government unknown to Endymion.

Such great confidence, and that exhibited by one who possessed so many winning qualities, excited in the breast of Endymion the most lively feelings of gratitude and regard. He tried to prove them by the vigilant and unwearying labour with which he served his master, and he served him every day more effectually, because every day he became more intimate with the mind and method of Mr. Wilton. Every one to a certain degree is a mannerist; every one has his ways; and a secretary will be assisted in the transaction of business if a vigilant observation has made him acquainted with the idiosyncrasy of his chief.

The regulations of the office which authorise a clerk, appointed to a private secretaryship, to deviate from the routine duties of the department, and devote his time entirely to the special requirements of his master, of course much assisted Endymion, and proved also a pleasant relief, for he had had enough at Somerset House of copying documents and drawing up formal reports. But it was not only at Whitehall that he saw Mr. Wilton, and experienced his kindness. Endymion was a frequent guest under Mr. Wilton's roof, and Mr. Wilton's establishment was one of the most distinguished in London. They met also much in the evenings, and always at Lady Roehampton's, where Mr. Wilton was never absent. Whenever and wherever they met, even if they had been working together the whole morning, Mr. Wilton always greeted Endymion with the utmost consideration—because he knew such a recognition would raise Endymion in the eyes of the social herd, who always observe little things, and generally form from them their opinions of great affairs.

CHAPTER L.

Mr. Wilton was at Charing Cross, on his way to his office, when a lady saluted him from her carriage, which then drew up to the pavement and stopped.

'We have just arrived,' said Lady Montfort, 'and I want you to give me a little dinner to-day. My lord is going to dine with an Old Bailey lawyer, who amuses him, and I do not like to be left, the first day, on the *pavé*.'

'I can give you a rather large dinner, if you care to come,' said Mr. Wilton, 'but I fear you will not like it. I have got some House of Commons men dining with me to-day, and one or two of the other House to meet them. My sister Georgina has very good-naturedly promised to come, with her husband, and I have just written a note to the Duchess Dowager of Keswick, who often helps me—but I fear this sort of thing would hardly suit you.'

'On the contrary, I think it will be very amusing. Only do not put me between two of your colleagues. Anybody amuses me for once. A new acquaintance is like a new book. I prefer it, even if bad, to a classic.'

The dinner party to-day at Mr. Wilton's was miscellaneous, and not heterogeneous enough to produce constraint, only to produce a little excitement—some commoners high in office, and the Treasury whip, several manufacturers who stood together in the room, and some metropolitan members. Georgina's husband, who was a lord-in-waiting, and a great swell, in a green riband, moved about with adroit condescension, and was bewitchingly affable. The manufacturing members whispered to each other that it was a wise thing to bring the two Houses together, but when Her Grace the Duchess Dowager of Keswick was announced, they exchanged glances of astounded satisfaction, and felt that the government, which had been thought to be in a somewhat rickety condition, would certainly stand.

Berengaria came a little late, not very. She thought it had been earlier, but it was not. The duchess dowager opened her eyes with wonderment when she beheld Lady Montfort, but the

company in general were not in the least aware of the vast social event that was occurring. They were gratified in seeing another fine lady, but did not, of course, rank her with a duchess.

The dinner went off better than Mr. Wilton could have hoped, as it was impossible to place a stranger by Lady Montfort. He sate in the middle of his table with the duchess dowager on his right hand, and Berengaria, who was taken out by the green riband, on the other. As he knew the green riband would be soon exhausted, he devoted himself to Lady Montfort, and left the duchess to her own resources, which were considerable, and she was soon laying down her opinions on men and things to her other neighbours with much effect. The manufacturers talked shop to each other in whispers, that is to say, mixed House of Commons tattle about bills and committees with news from Manchester and Liverpool, and the West Riding. The metropolitan members, then a more cosmopolitan body and highly miscellaneous in their character and pursuits, were louder, and perhaps more easy, even ventured to talk across the table when near its end, and enticed the peers into discussions on foreign politics.

Mr. Sidney Wilton having been delightful, thought it necessary to observe that he feared Lady Montfort had been bored. 'I have been, and am, extremely amused,' she replied; 'and now tell me, who is that young man at the very end of the table?'

'That is my private secretary, Mr. Ferrars.'

'Ferrars!'

'A brother of Lady Roehampton.'

'Present him to me after dinner.'

Endymion knew Lady Montfort by sight, though she did not know him. He had seen her more than once at the receptions of Mrs. Neuchatel, where, as indeed in every place, she was the cynosure. He was much astonished at meeting her at this party to-day,—almost as surprised as the duchess dowager, for Endymion, who was of an observant nature, was beginning to comprehend society and all its numerous elements, and schools, and shades, and classes. When they entered the saloon, Mr.

Wilton led Endymion up to Lady Montfort at once, and she immediately inquired after his sister. 'Do you think,' she said, 'Lady Roehampton would see me to-morrow if I called on her?'

'If I were Lady Roehampton, I would,' said Endymion.

Lady Montfort looked at him with a glance of curious scrutiny; not smiling, and yet not displeased. 'I will write her a little note in the morning,' said Lady Montfort thoughtfully. 'One may leave cards for ever. Mr. Wilton tells me you are quite his right hand.'

'Mr. Wilton is too kind to me,' said Endymion. 'One could not be excused for not doing one's best for such a master.'

'You like people to be kind to you?' said Lady Montfort.

'Well, I have not met with so much kindness in this world as to have become insensible to it.'

'You are too young to be melancholy,' said Lady Montfort; 'are you older than Lady Roehampton?'

'We are twins.'

'Twins! and wonderfully like too! Is it not thought so?'

'I have sometimes heard it mentioned.'

'Oh, it is striking!' said Lady Montfort, and she motioned to him to sit down by her; and then she began to talk politics, and asked him what the members thought at dinner of the prospects of the government, and what he had heard of the malcontent movement that they said was *in petto*. Endymion replied that Mr. Sharpset, the Secretary of the Treasury, did not think much of it.

'Well, I wish I did not,' said Lady Montfort. 'However, I will soon find out something about it. I have only just come to town; but I intend to open my house immediately. Now I must go. What are you going to do with yourself to-morrow? I wish you would come and dine with Lord Montfort. It will be quite without form, a few agreeable and amusing people; Lord Montfort must be amused. It seems a reasonable fancy, but very difficult to realise; and now you shall ask for my carriage, and to-morrow I hope to be able to tell Lady Roehampton what very great pleasure I have had in making the acquaintance of her brother.'

CHAPTER LI.

The morning after, Endymion was emerging from the court-yard of the Albany, in order to call on Mr. Rodney, who, as he learnt from a casual remark in a letter from Waldershare, would be in town. The ladies were left behind for the last week of hunting, but business called Mr. Rodney home. Waldershare wrote to Endymion in the highest spirits, and more than once declared that he was the happiest of men. Just as Endymion had entered Piccadilly, he was stopped by a once familiar face; it was St. Barbe, who accosted him with great warmth, and as usual began to talk about himself. 'You are surprised to see me,' he said. 'It is two years since we met. Well, I have done wonders; carried all before me. By Jove, sir, I can walk into a minister's private room with as much ease as if I were entering the old den. The ambassadors are hand and glove with me. There are very few things I do not know. I have made the fortune of the "Chuck-Farthing," trebled its circulation, and invented a new style, which has put me at the head of all "our own correspondents." I wish you were at Paris; I would give you a dinner at the Rocher, which would make up for all our dinners at that ferocious ruffian, Joe's. I gave a dinner the other day to forty of them, all "our own correspondents," or such like. Do you know, my dear fellow, when I looked round the room, there was not a man who had not done his best to crush me; running down my works or not noticing them, or continually dilating on Gushy, as if the English public would never read anything else. Now, that was Christian-like of me, was not it? God, sir, if they only had but one neck, and I had been the Emperor Nero—but, I will not dwell on it; I hate them. However, it suits me to take the other line at present. I am all for fraternity and that sort of thing, and give them dinners. There is a reason why, but there is no time to talk about that now. I shall want their sweet voices—the hounds! But, my dear fellow, I am truly glad to see you. Do you know, I always liked you; and how come you to be in this quarter this fine morning?'

'I live in the Albany,' said Endymion.

'You live in the Albany!' repeated St. Barbe, with an amazed and perturbed expression. 'I knew I could not be a knight of the garter, or a member of White's—the only two things an Englishman cannot command; but I did think I might some day live in the Albany. It was my dream. And you live there! Gracious! what an unfortunate fellow I am! I do not see how you can live in the Albany with your salary; I suppose they have raised you.'

'I have left Somerset House,' said Endymion, 'and am now at the Board of Trade, and am private secretary to Mr. Sidney Wilton.'

'Oh!' said St. Barbe; 'then we have friends at court. You may do something for me, if I only knew what I wanted. They have no decorations here. Curse this aristocratic country, they want all the honours to themselves. I should like to be in the Board of Trade, and would make some sacrifice for it. The proprietors of the "Chuck-Farthing" pay well; they pay like gentlemen; though, why I say so I do not exactly know, for no gentleman ever paid me anything. But, if I could be Secretary of the Board of Trade, or get £1500 a year secure, I would take it; and I dare say I could get employed on some treaties, as I speak French, and then I might get knighted.'

'Well, I think you are very well off,' said Endymion; 'carrying, as you say, everything before you. What more can you want?'

'I hate the craft,' said St. Barbe, with an expression of genuine detestation; 'I should like to show them all up before I died. I suppose it was your sister marrying a lord that got you on in this way. I could have married a countess myself, but then, to be sure, she was only a Polish one, and hard up. I never had a sister; I never had any luck in life at all. I wish I had been a woman. Women are the only people who get on. A man works all his life, and thinks he has done a wonderful thing if, with one leg in the grave and no hair on his head, he manages to get a coronet; and a woman dances at a ball with some young fellow or other, or sits next to some old fellow at dinner and pretends she thinks him charming, and

he makes her a peeress on the spot. Oh! it is a disgusting world; it must end in revolution. Now you tell your master, Mr. Sidney Wilton, that if he wants to strengthen the institutions of this country, the government should establish an order of merit, and the press ought to be represented in it. I do not speak only for myself; I speak for my brethren. Yes, sir, I am not ashamed of my order.'

And so they bade each other farewell.

'Unchanged,' thought Endymion, as he crossed Piccadilly; 'the vainest, the most envious, and the most amusing of men! I wonder what he will do in life.'

Mr. Rodney was at home, had just finished his breakfast, read his newspaper, and was about to 'go into the City.' His costume was perfect. Mr. Rodney's hat seemed always a new one. Endymion was a little embarrassed by this interview, for he had naturally a kind heart, and being young, it was still soft. The Rodneys had been truly good to him, and he was attached to them. Imogene had prepared Mr. Rodney for the change in Endymion's life, and Endymion himself had every reason to believe that in a worldly point of view the matter was entirely insignificant to his old landlord. Still his visit this morning ratified a permanent separation from those with whom he had lived for a long time, and under circumstances of sympathy and family connection which were touching. He retained Mr. Rodney's hand for a moment as he expressed, and almost in faltering tones, his sorrow at their separation and his hope that their friendly connection might be always cherished.

'That feeling is reciprocal,' said Mr. Rodney. 'If only because you were the son of my revered and right honourable friend, you would always be esteemed here. But you are esteemed, or, I may say beloved, for your own sake. We shall be proud to be considered with kindness by you, and I echo your wish that, though no longer living under the same roof, we may yet, and even often, meet. But do not say another word about the inconvenience you are occasioning us. The truth is, that although wherever we went the son of my revered and right honourable friend would have always commanded hospitality from us, there are many changes about to take place

in our family, which have made us for some time contemplate leaving Warwick Street. Affairs, especially of late, have gone pretty well with me in the world,—at least not badly; I have had friends, and I hope have proved not undeserving of them. I wish Sylvia, too, to live in an airier situation, near the park, so that she may ride every morning. Besides, I have a piece of news to communicate to you, which would materially affect our arrangements. We are going to lose Imogene.'

'Ah! she is going to be married,' said Endymion, blushing.

'She is going to be married,' said Mr. Rodney gravely.

'To Mr. Waldershare?' said Endymion. 'He almost said as much to me in a letter this morning. But I always thought so.'

'No; not to Mr. Waldershare,' said Mr. Rodney.

'Who is the happy man then?' said Endymion, agitated. 'I truly call him so; for I think myself that Imogene is perfection.'

'Imogene is about to be married to the Earl of Beaumaris.'

CHAPTER LII.

Simon, Earl of Montfort, with whom Endymion was so unexpectedly going to dine, may be said to have been a minor in his cradle. Under ordinary circumstances, his inheritance would have been one of the most considerable in England. His castle in the north was one of the glories of the land, and becomingly crowned his vast domain. Under the old parliamentary system, he had the greatest number of nomination boroughs possessed by any Whig noble. The character and conduct of an individual so qualified were naturally much speculated on and finely scanned. Nothing very decided transpired about them in his boyhood, but certainly nothing adverse. He was good-looking and athletic, and was said to be generous and good-natured, and when he went to Harrow, he became popular. In his eighteenth year, while he was in correspondence with his guardians about going to Christ Church, he suddenly left his country without giving any one notice of his intentions, and entered into, and fulfilled, a vast scheme of adventurous travel. He visited countries then rarely reached, and some of which

were almost unknown. His flag had floated in the Indian Ocean, and he had penetrated the dazzling mysteries of Brazilian forests. When he was of age, he returned, and communicated with his guardians, as if nothing remarkable had happened in his life. Lord Montfort had inherited a celebrated stud, which the family had maintained for more than a century, and the sporting world remarked with satisfaction that their present representative appeared to take much interest in it. He had an establishment at Newmarket, and his horses were entered for all the great races of the kingdom. He appeared also at Melton, and conducted the campaign in a style becoming such a hero. His hunters and his cooks were both first-rate. Although he affected to take little interest in politics, the events of the time forced him to consider them and to act. Lord Grey wanted to carry his Reform Bill, and the sacrifice of Lord Montfort's numerous boroughs was a necessary ingredient in the spell. He was appealed to as the head of one of the greatest Whig houses, and he was offered a dukedom. He relinquished his boroughs without hesitation, but he preferred to remain with one of the oldest earldoms of England for his chief title. All honours, however, clustered about him, though he never sought them, and in the same year he tumbled into the Lord Lieutenancy of his county, unexpectedly vacant, and became the youngest Knight of the Garter.

Society was looking forward with the keenest interest to the impending season, when Lord Montfort would formally enter its spell-bound ranks, and multiform were the speculations on his destiny. He attended an early levée, in order that he might be presented—a needful ceremony which had not yet taken place—and then again quitted his country, and for years. He was heard of in every capital except his own. Wonderful exploits at St. Petersburg, and Paris, and Madrid, deeds of mark at Vienna, and eccentric adventures at Rome; but poor Melton, alas! expecting him to return every season, at last embalmed him, and his cooks, and his hunters, and his daring saddle, as a tradition,—jealous a little of Newmarket, whither, though absent, he was frequently transmitting foreign blood, and where his horses still ran, and were often victorious.

At last it would appear that the restless Lord Montfort had found his place, and that place was Paris. There he dwelt for years in Sybaritic seclusion. He built himself a palace, which he called a villa, and which was the most fanciful of structures, and full of every beautiful object which rare taste and boundless wealth could procure, from undoubted Raffaelles to jewelled toys. It was said that Lord Montfort saw no one; he certainly did not court or receive his own countrymen, and this perhaps gave rise to, or at least caused to be exaggerated, the tales that were rife of his profusion, and even his profligacy. But it was not true that he was entirely isolated. He lived much with the old families of France in their haughty faubourg, and was highly considered by them. It was truly a circle for which he was adapted. Lord Montfort was the only living Englishman who gave one an idea of the nobleman of the eighteenth century. He was totally devoid of the sense of responsibility, and he looked what he resembled. His manner, though simple and natural, was finished and refined, and, free from forbidding reserve, was yet characterised by an air of serious grace.

With the exception of the memorable year when he sacrificed his nomination boroughs to the cause for which Hampden died on the field and Sidney on the scaffold—that is to say, the Whig government of England—Lord Montfort had been absent from his country for ten years, and one day, in his statued garden at the Belvedere, he asked himself what he had gained by it. There was no subject, divine or human, in which he took the slightest interest. He entertained for human nature generally, and without any exception, the most cynical appreciation. He had a sincere and profound conviction, that no man or woman ever acted except from selfish and interested motives. Society was intolerable to him; that of his own sex and station wearisome beyond expression; their conversation consisted only of two subjects, horses and women, and he had long exhausted both. As for female society, if they were ladies, it was expected that, in some form or other, he should make love to them, and he had no sentiment. If he took refuge in the *demi-monde*, he encountered vulgarity, and that, to Lord Montfort, was insufferable. He had tried them in

every capital, and vulgarity was the badge of all their tribe. He had attempted to read; a woman had told him to read French novels, but he found them only a clumsy representation of the life which, for years, he had practically been leading. An accident made him acquainted with Rabelais and Montaigne; and he had relished them, for he had a fine sense of humour. He might have pursued these studies, and perhaps have found in them a slight and occasional distraction, but a clever man he met at a guingette at Passy, whither he had gone to try to dissipate his weariness in disguise, had convinced him, that if there were a worthy human pursuit, an assumption which was doubtful, it was that of science, as it impressed upon man his utter insignificance.

No one could say Lord Montfort was a bad-hearted man, for he had no heart. He was good-natured, provided it brought him no inconvenience; and as for temper, his was never disturbed, but this not from sweetness of disposition, rather from a contemptuous fine taste, which assured him, that a gentleman should never be deprived of tranquillity in a world where nothing was of the slightest consequence.

The result of these reflections was, that he was utterly wearied with Belvedere and Paris, and as his mind was now rather upon science, he fancied he should like to return to a country where it flourished, and where he indulged in plans of erecting colossal telescopes, and of promoting inquiry into the origin of things. He thought that with science and with fishing, the only sport to which he still really clung, for he liked the lulling influence of running streams, and a pastime he could pursue in loneliness, existence might perhaps be endured.

Society was really surprised when they heard of the return of Lord Montfort to England. He came back in the autumn, so that there should be no season to encounter, and his flag was soon flying at his castle. There had been continuous attacks for years on the government for having made an absentee lord lieutenant of his county, and conferring the high distinction of the garter on so profligate a character. All this made his return more interesting and exciting.

A worthy nobleman of high rank and of the same county,

who for the last five years everybody, shaking everybody's head, had been saying ought to have been lord lieutenant, had a great county function in his immediate neighbourhood in the late autumn, and had invited a large party to assist him in its celebration. It seemed right also to invite the lord lieutenant, but no one expected that he would make his appearance. On the contrary, the invitation was accepted, and the sensation was great. What would he be like, and what would he do, and was he so very wicked as the county newspaper said? He came, this wicked man, with his graceful presence and his diamond star, and everybody's heart palpitated with a due mixture of terror and admiration. The only exception to these feelings was the daughter of the house, the Lady Berengaria. She was then in her second season, but still unparagoned, for she was a fastidious, not to say disdainful lady. The highest had been at her feet, and sued in vain. She was a stirring spirit, with great ambition and a daring will; never content except in society, and influencing it—for which she was qualified by her grace and lively fancy, her ready though capricious sympathy, and her passion for admiration.

The function was successful, and the county full of enthusiasm for their lord lieutenant, whose manner quite cleared his character. The party did not break up, in fact the function was only an excuse for the party. There was sport of all kinds, and in the evenings a carnival—for Lady Berengaria required everybody about her to be gay and diverting—games and dances, and infinite frolic. Lord Montfort, who, to the surprise of every one, did not depart, spoke to her a little, and perhaps would not have spoken at all, had they not met in the hunting-field. Lady Berengaria was a first-rate horsewoman, and really in the saddle looked irresistible.

The night before the party, which had lasted a week, broke up, Lord Montfort came and sat by Lady Berengaria. He spoke about the run of the morning, and she replied in the same vein. 'I have got a horse, Lady Berengaria, which I should like you to ride. Would you do so?'

'Certainly, and what sort of horse is it?'

'You shall see to-morrow. It is not far off. I like to have some horses always near,' and then he walked away.

It was a dark chestnut of matchless beauty. Lady Berengaria, who was of an emphatic nature, was loud in her admiration of its beauty and its hunting qualities.

'I agree with you,' said Lord Montfort, 'that it will spoil you for any other horse, and therefore I shall ask permission to leave it here for your use.'

The party broke up, but, strange to say, Lord Montfort did not depart. It was a large family. Lady Berengaria had several sisters; her eldest brother was master of the hounds, and her younger brothers were asserting their rights as cadets, and killing their father's pheasants. There was also a number of cousins, who were about the same age, and were always laughing, though it was never quite clear what it was about. An affectation of gaiety may be sometimes detected in youth.

As Lord Montfort always had the duty of ushering the lady of the house to dinner, he never had the opportunity of conversing with Lady Berengaria, even had he wished it; but it was not all clear that he did wish it, and it seemed that he talked as much to her sisters and the laughing cousins as to herself, but still he did not go away, which was most strange, and commenced to be embarrassing.

At last one evening, both her parents slumbering, one over the newspaper and the other over her work, and the rest of the party in a distant room playing at some new game amid occasional peals of laughter, Lord Montfort, who had been sitting for some time by Lady Berengaria's side, and only asking now and then a question, though often a searching one, in order to secure her talking to him, rather abruptly said, 'I wonder if anything would ever induce you to marry me?'

This was the most startling social event of the generation. Society immediately set a-wondering how it would turn out, and proved very clearly that it must turn out badly. Men who knew Montfort well at Paris looked knowing, and said they would give it six months.

But the lady was as remarkable as a woman as the bridegroom

was in his sex. Lady Berengaria was determined to be the Queen of Society, and had confidence in her unlimited influence over man. It is, however, rather difficult to work on the feelings of a man who has no heart. This she soon found out, and to her dismay, but she kept it a profound secret. By endless ingenuity on her part, affairs went on very well much longer than the world expected, and long enough to fulfil the object of Lady Berengaria's life. Lord Montfort launched his wife well, and seemed even content to be occasionally her companion until she had mounted the social throne. He was proud of her as he would be of one of his beautiful horses; but when all the world had acknowledged the influence of Berengaria, he fell into one of his old moods, and broke to her that he could bear it no longer, and that he must retire from society. Lady Montfort looked distressed, but, resolved under no circumstances to be separated from her husband, whom she greatly admired, and to whom, had he wished it, she could have become even passionately attached, signified her readiness to share his solitude. But she then found out that this was not what he wanted. It was not only retirement from society, but retirement from Lady Montfort, that was indispensable. In short, at no time of his perverse career had Lord Montfort been more wilful.

During the last years of his residence in Paris, when he was shut up in his delicious Belvedere, he had complained much of the state of his health, and one of his principal pursuits was consulting the faculty on this interesting subject. The faculty were unanimous in their opinion that the disorder from which their patient was suffering was *Ennui*. This persistent opinion irritated him, and was one of the elements of his decision to leave the country. The unexpected distraction that followed his return to his native land had made him neglect or forget his sad indisposition, but it appears that it had now returned, and in an aggravated form. Unhappily the English physicians took much the same view of the case as their French brethren. They could find nothing organically wrong in the constitution or condition of Lord Montfort, and recommended occupation and society. At present he shrank with some disgust at the prospect of returning to France, and he had taken it into his head that

the climate of Montfort did not agree with him. He was convinced that he must live in the south of England. One of the most beautiful and considerable estates in that favoured part of our country was virtually in the market, and Lord Montfort, at the cost of half a million, became the proprietor of Princedown. And here he announced that he should dwell and die.

This state of affairs was a bitter trial to the proudest woman in England, but Lady Montfort was also one of the most able. She resisted nothing, sympathised with all his projects, and watched her opportunity when she could extract from his unconscious good-nature some reasonable modification of them. And she ultimately succeeded in establishing a *modus vivendi*. He was to live and die at Princedown; that was settled; but if he ever came to town, to consult his physicians, for example, he was always to inhabit Montfort House, and if she occasionally required a whiff of southern air, she was to have her rooms always ready for her at Princedown. She would not interfere with him in the least; he need not even see her, if he were too unwell. Then as to the general principle of his life, it was quite clear that he was not interested in anything, and never would be interested in anything; but there was no reason that he should not be amused. This distinction between interest and amusement rather pleased, and seemed to satisfy Lord Montfort —but then it was difficult to amuse him. The only thing that ever amused him, he said, were his wife's letters, and as he was the most selfish as well as the most polite of men, he requested her to write to him every day. Great personages, who are selfish and whimsical, are generally surrounded by parasites and buffoons, but this would not suit Lord Montfort; he sincerely detested flattery, and he wearied in eight-and-forty hours of the most successful mountebank in society. What he seemed inclined to was the society of men of science, of travellers in rare parts, and of clever artists; in short, of all persons who had what he called 'idiosyncrasy.' Civil engineering was then beginning to attract general attention, and Lord Montfort liked the society of civil engineers; but what he liked most were self-formed men, and to learn the secret of their success, and how they made their fortune. After the first fit of Princedown was over, Lord Mont-

fort found that it was impossible, even with all its fascination, to secure a constant, or sufficient, presence of civil engineers in such distant parts, and so he got into the habit of coming up to Montfort House, that he might find companions and be amused. Lady Montfort took great pains that he should not be disappointed, and catered for him with all the skill of an accomplished *chef*. Then, when the occasion served, she went down to Princedown herself with welcome guests—and so it turned out, that circumstances, which treated by an ordinary mind must have led to a social scandal, were so adroitly manipulated, that the world little apprehended the real and somewhat mortifying state of affairs. With the utmost license of ill-nature, they could not suppose that Lord and Lady Montfort, living under the same roof, might scarcely see each other for weeks, and that his communications with her, and indeed generally, were always made in writing.

Lady Montfort never could agree with her husband in the cardinal assumption of his philosophy. One of his reasons for never doing anything was, that there was nothing for him to attain. He had got everything. Here they at once separated in their conclusions. Lady Montfort maintained they had got nothing. 'What,' she would say, 'are rank and wealth to us? We were born to them. We want something that we were not born to. You reason like a parvenu. Of course, if you had created your rank and your riches, you might rest on your oars, and find excitement in the recollection of what you had achieved. A man of your position ought to govern the country, and it always was so in old days. Your family were prime ministers; why not you, with as much talent, and much more knowledge?'

'You would make a very good prime minister, Berengaria.'

'Ah! you always jest, I am serious.'

'And so am I. If I ever am to work, I would sooner be a civil engineer than a prime minister.'

Nothing but the indomitable spirit of Lady Montfort could fight successfully against such obstacles to her schemes of power as were presented by the peculiar disposition of her lord. Her receptions every Saturday night during the season were the most important of social gatherings, but she held them alone.

It was by consummate skill that she had prevailed upon her lord occasionally appearing at the preceding banquets, and when they were over, he flitted for an instant and disappeared. At first, he altogether refused, but then Lady Montfort would induce Royalty, always kind, to condescend to express a wish to dine at Montfort House, and that was a gracious intimation it was impossible not to act upon, and then, as Lady Montfort would say, 'I trust much to the periodical visits of that dear Queen of Mesopotamia. He must entertain her, for his father was her lover.'

In this wonderful mystification, by which Lord Montfort was made to appear as living in a society which he scarcely ever entered, his wife was a little assisted by his visits to Newmarket, which he even frequently attended. He never made a bet or a new acquaintance, but he seemed to like meeting men with whom he had been at school. There is certainly a magic in the memory of school-boy friendships; it softens the heart, and even affects the nervous system of those who have no hearts. Lord Montfort at Newmarket would ask half a dozen men who had been at school with him, and were now members of the Jockey Club, to be his guests, and the next day all over the heath, and after the heath, all over Mayfair and Belgravia, you heard only one speech, 'I dined yesterday,' or 'the other day,' as the case might be, 'with Montfort; out and out the best dinner I ever had, and such an agreeable fellow; the wittiest, the most amusing, certainly the most charming fellow that ever lived; out and out! It is a pity he does not show a little more.' And society thought the same; they thought it a pity, and a great one, that this fascinating being of whom they rarely caught a glimpse, and who to them took the form of a wasted and unsympathising phantom, should not show a little more and delight them. But the most curious thing was, that however rapturous were his guests, the feelings of their host after they had left him, were by no means reciprocal. On the contrary, he would remark to himself, 'Have I heard a single thing worth remembering? Not one.'

CHAPTER LIII.

ENDYMION was a little agitated when he arrived at the door of Montfort House, a huge family mansion, situate in a court-yard and looking into the Green Park. When the door was opened he found himself in a large hall with many servants, and he was ushered through several rooms on the ground floor, into a capacious chamber dimly lighted, where there were several gentlemen, but not his hostess. His name was announced, and then a young man came up to him and mentioned that Lord and Lady Montfort would soon be present, and then talked to him about the weather. The Count of Ferroll arrived after Endymion, and then another gentleman whose name he could not catch. Then while he was making some original observations on the east wind, and, to confess the truth, feeling anything but at his ease, the folding doors of a further chamber brilliantly lighted were thrown open, and almost at the same moment Lady Montfort entered, and, taking the Count of Ferroll's arm, walked into the dining-room. It was a round table, and Endymion was told by the same gentleman who had already addressed him, that he was to sit by Lady Montfort.

'Lord Montfort is a little late to-day,' she said, 'but he wished me not to wait for him. And how are you after our parliamentary banquet?' she said, turning to Endymion; 'I will introduce you to the Count of Ferroll.'

The Count of Ferroll was a young man, and yet inclined to be bald. He was chief of a not inconsiderable mission at our court. Though not to be described as a handsome man, his countenance was striking; a brow of much intellectual development, and a massive jaw. He was tall, broad-shouldered, with a slender waist. He greeted Endymion with a penetrating glance, and then with a winning smile.

The Count of Ferroll was the representative of a kingdom which, if not exactly created, had been moulded into a certain form of apparent strength and importance by the Congress of Vienna. He was a noble of considerable estate in a country where pos-

sessions were not extensive or fortunes large, though it was ruled by an ancient, and haughty, and warlike aristocracy. Like his class, the Count of Ferroll had received a military education; but when that education was completed, he found but a feeble prospect of his acquirements being called into action. It was believed that the age of great wars had ceased, and that even revolutions were for the future to be controlled by diplomacy. As he was a man of an original, not to say eccentric, turn of mind, the Count of Ferroll was not contented with the resources and distraction of his second-rate capital. He was an eminent sportsman, and, for some time, took refuge and found excitement in the breadth of his dark forests, and in the formation of a stud, which had already become celebrated. But all this time, even in the excitement of the chase, and in the raising of his rare-bred steeds, the Count of Ferroll might be said to have been brooding over the position of what he could scarcely call his country, but rather an aggregation of lands baptized by protocols, and christened and consolidated by treaties which he looked upon as eminently untrustworthy. One day he surprised his sovereign, with whom he was a favourite, by requesting to be appointed to the legation at London, which was vacant. The appointment was at once made, and the Count of Ferroll had now been two years at the Court of St. James'.

The Count of Ferroll was a favourite in English society, for he possessed every quality which there conduces to success. He was of great family and of distinguished appearance, munificent and singularly frank; was a dead-shot, and the boldest of riders, with horses which were the admiration alike of Melton and Newmarket. The ladies also approved of him, for he was a consummate waltzer, and mixed with a badinage gaily cynical a tone that could be tender and a bewitching smile.

But his great friend was Lady Montfort. He told her everything, and consulted her on everything; and though he rarely praised anybody, it had reached her ears that the Count of Ferroll had said more than once that she was a greater woman than Louise of Savoy or the Duchesse de Longueville.

There was a slight rustling in the room. A gentleman had entered and glided into his unoccupied chair, which his valet

had guarded. 'I fear I am not in time for an oyster,' said Lord Montfort to his neighbour.

The gentleman who had first spoken to Endymion was the secretary of Lord Montfort; then there was a great genius who was projecting a suspension bridge over the Tyne, and that was in Lord Montfort's country. A distinguished officer of the British Museum completed the party with a person who sate opposite Endymion, and whom in the dim twilight he had not recognised, but whom he now beheld with no little emotion. It was Nigel Penruddock. They had not met since his mother's funeral, and the associations of the past agitated Endymion. They exchanged recognitions; that of Nigel was grave but kind.

The conversation was what is called general, and a great deal on suspension bridges. Lord Montfort himself led off on this, in order to bring out his distinguished guest. The Count of Ferroll was also interested on this subject, as his own government was making inquiries on the matter. The gentleman from the British Museum made some remarks on the mode in which the ancient Egyptians moved masses of granite, and quoted Herodotus to the civil engineer. The civil engineer had never heard of Herodotus, but he said he was going to Egypt in the autumn by desire of Mehemet Ali, and he would undertake to move any mass which was requisite, even if it were a pyramid itself. Lady Montfort, without disturbing the general conversation, whispered in turns to the Count of Ferroll and Endymion, and told the latter that she had paid a visit to Lady Roehampton in the morning—a most delightful visit. There was no person she admired so much as his sister; she quite loved her. The only person who was silent was Nigel, but Lady Montfort, who perceived everything, addressed him across the table with enthusiasm about some changes he had made in the services of some church, and the countenance of Nigel became suffused like a young saint who has a glimpse of Paradise.

After dinner Lady Montfort led Endymion to her lord, and left him seated by his host. Lord Montfort was affable and natural in his manner. He said, 'I have not yet made the acquaintance of Lady Roehampton, for I never go out; but I hope to do so, for Lady Montfort tells me she is quite captivating.'

'She is a very good sister,' said Endymion.

'Lady Montfort has told me a great deal about yourself, and all of it I was glad to hear. I like young men who rise by their merits, and Mr. Sidney Wilton tells Lady Montfort that yours are distinguished.'

'Mr. Sidney Wilton is a kind master, sir.'

'Well, I was his fag at Harrow, and I thought him so,' said Lord Montfort. 'And now about your office; tell me what you do. You were not there first, Lady Montfort says. Where were you first? Tell me all about it. I like detail.'

It was impossible to resist such polished and amiable curiosity, and Endymion gratified it with youthful grace. He even gave Lord Montfort a sketch of St. Barbe, inspired probably by the interview of the morning. Lord Montfort was quite amused with this, and said he should so much like to know Mr. St. Barbe. It was clear, when the party broke up, that Endymion had made a favourable impression, for Lord Montfort said, 'You came here to-day as Lady Montfort's friend, but you must come in future as mine also. And will you understand, I dine at home every day when I am in town, and I give you a general invitation. Come as often as you like; you will be always welcome. Only let the house know your intention an hour before dinner-time, as I have a particular aversion to the table being crowded, or seeing an empty chair.'

Lady Montfort had passed much of the evening in earnest conversation with Nigel, and when the guests quitted the room, Nigel and Endymion walked away together.

CHAPTER LIV.

The meeting between Nigel and Endymion was not an ordinary one, and when they were at length alone, neither of them concealed his feelings of pleasure and surprise at its occurrence. Nigel had been a curate in the northern town which was defended by Lord Montfort's proud castle, and his labours and reputation had attracted the attention of Lady Montfort. Under

the influence of his powerful character, the services of his church were celebrated with a precision and an imposing effect, which soon occasioned a considerable excitement in the neighbourhood, in time even in the county. The pulpit was frequently at his command, for his rector, who had imbibed his Church views, was not equal to the task of propagating them, and the power and fame of Nigel as a preacher began to be much rumoured. Although the church at which he officiated was not the one which Lady Montfort usually attended, she was soon among his congregation and remained there. He became a constant guest at the castle, and Lady Montfort presented his church with a reredos of alabaster. She did more than this. Her enthusiasm exceeded her selfishness, for though the sacrifice was great which would deprive her of the ministrations and society of Nigel in the country, she prevailed upon the prime minister to prefer him to a new church in London, which had just fallen vacant, and which, being situated in a wealthy and populous district, would afford him the opportunity of making known to the world his eloquence and genius. This was Nigel's simple, yet not uneventful history; and then, in turn, he listened to Endymion's brief but interesting narrative of his career, and then they agreed to adjourn to Endymion's chambers and have a good talk over the past and the present.

'That Lady Montfort is a great woman,' said Nigel, standing with his back to the fire. 'She has it in her to be another Empress Helena.'

'Indeed!'

'I believe she has only one thought, and that the only thought worthy the human mind—the Church. I was glad to meet you at her house. You have cherished, I hope, those views which in your boyhood you so fervently and seriously embraced.'

'I am rather surprised,' said Endymion, not caring to answer this inquiry, 'at a Whig lady entertaining such high views in these matters. The Liberal party rather depends on the Low Church.'

'I know nothing about Whigs or Tories or Liberals, or any other new names which they invent,' said Nigel. 'Nor do I

know, or care to know, what Low Church means. There is but one Church, and it is catholic and apostolic; and if we act on its principles, there will be no need, and there ought to be no need, for any other form of government.'

'Well, those are very distinct views,' said Endymion, 'but are they as practical as they are clear?'

'Why should they not be practical? Everything is practical which we believe; and in the long run, which is most likely that we should believe, what is taught by God, or what is taught by man?'

'I confess,' said Endymion, 'that in all matters, both civil and religious, I incline to what is moderate and temperate. I always trace my dear father's sad end, and all the terrible events in my family, to his adopting in 1829 the views of the extreme party. If he had only followed the example and the advice of his best friend, Mr. Sidney Wilton, what a different state of affairs might have occurred!'

'I know nothing about politics,' said Nigel. 'By being moderate and temperate in politics I suppose you mean being adroit, and doing that which is expedient and which will probably be successful. But the Church is founded on absolute truth, and teaches absolute truth, and there can be no compromise on such matters.'

'Well, I do not know,' said Endymion, 'but surely there are many very religious people, who do not accept without reserve everything that is taught by the Church. I hope I am a religious person myself, and yet, for example, I cannot give an unreserved assent to the whole of the Athanasian Creed.'

'The Athanasian Creed is the most splendid ecclesiastical lyric ever poured forth by the genius of man. I give to every clause of it an implicit assent. It does not pretend to be divine; it is human, but the Church has hallowed it, and the Church ever acts under the influence of the Divine Spirit. St. Athanasius was by far the greatest man that ever existed. If you cavil at his creed, you will soon cavil at other symbols. I was prepared for infidelity in London, but I confess, my dear Ferrars, you alarm me. I was in hopes that your early education would have saved you from this backsliding.'

'But let us be calm, my dear Nigel. Do you mean to say, that I am to be considered an infidel or an apostate, because, although I fervently embrace all the vital truths of religion, and try, on the whole, to regulate my life by them, I may have scruples about believing, for example, in the personality of the Devil?'

'If the personality of Satan be not a vital principle of your religion, I do not know what is. There is only one dogma higher. You think it is safe, and I daresay it is fashionable, to fall into this lax and really thoughtless discrimination between what is and what is not to be believed. It is not good taste to believe in the Devil. Give me a single argument against his personality which is not applicable to the personality of the Deity. Will you give that up; and if so, where are you? Now mark me; you and I are young men—you are a very young man. This is the year of grace 1839. If these loose thoughts, which you have heedlessly taken up, prevail in this country for a generation or so—five and twenty or thirty years—we may meet together again, and I shall have to convince you that there is a God.'

CHAPTER LV.

The balance of parties in the House of Commons, which had been virtually restored by Sir Robert Peel's dissolution of 1834, might be said to be formally and positively established by the dissolution of parliament in the autumn of 1837, occasioned by the demise of the crown. The ministerial majority became almost nominal, while troubles from all quarters seemed to press simultaneously upon them: Canadian revolts, Chartist insurrections, Chinese squabbles, and mysterious complications in Central Asia, which threatened immediate hostilities with Persia, and even with one of the most powerful of European empires. In addition to all this, the revenue continually declined, and every day the general prejudice became more intense against the Irish policy of the ministry. The extreme popularity of the Sovereign, reflecting some lustre on her ministers, had

enabled them, though not without difficulty, to tide through the session of 1838; but when parliament met in 1839 their prospects were dark, and it was known that there was a section of the extreme Liberals who would not be deeply mortified if the government were overthrown. All efforts, therefore, political and social, and particularly the latter, in which the Whigs excelled, were to be made to prevent or to retard the catastrophe.

Lady Montfort and Lady Roehampton opened their houses to the general world at an unusually early period. Their entertainments rivalled those of Zenobia, who with unflagging gallantry, her radiant face prescient of triumph, stopped her bright vis-à-vis and her tall footmen in the midst of St. James' Street or Pall Mall, while she rapidly inquired from some friendly passer-by whom she had observed, 'Tell me the names of the Radical members who want to turn out the government, and I will invite them directly.'

Lady Montfort had appropriated the Saturdays, as was her custom and her right; so Myra, with the advice of Lord Roehampton, had fixed on Wednesdays for her receptions.

'I should have liked to have taken Wednesdays,' said Zenobia, 'but I do not care to seem to be setting up against Lady Roehampton, for her mother was my dearest friend. Not that I think any quarter ought to be shown to her after joining those atrocious Whigs, but to be sure she was corrupted by her husband, whom I remember the most thorough Tory going. To be sure, I was a Whig myself in those days, so one must not say too much about it, but the Whigs then were gentlemen. I will tell you what I will do. I will receive both on Saturdays and Wednesdays. It is an effort, and I am not as young as I was, but it will only be for a season or less, for I know these people cannot stand. It will be all over by May.'

Prince Florestan had arrived in town, and was now settled in his mansion in Carlton Terrace. It was the fashion among the *crème de la crème* to keep aloof from him. The Tories did not love revolutionary dynasties, and the Whigs being in office could not sanction a pretender, and one who, they significantly intimated with a charitable shrug of the shoulders, was not a very scrupulous one. The prince himself, though he was not

insensible to the charms of society, and especially of agreeable women, was not much chagrined by this. The world thought that he had fitted up his fine house, and bought his fine horses, merely for the enjoyment of life. His purposes were very different. Though his acquaintances were limited, they were not undistinguished, and he lived with them in intimacy. There had arisen between himself and Mr. Waldershare the closest alliance both of thought and habits. They were rarely separated. The prince was also a frequent guest at the Neuchatels', and was a favourite with the head of the house.

The Duke of St. Angelo controlled the household at Carlton Gardens with skill. The appointments were finished and the cuisine refined. There was a dinner twice a week, from which Waldershare was rarely absent, and to which Endymion, whom the prince always treated with kindness, had a general invitation. When he occasionally dined there he met always several foreign guests, and all men apparently of mark—at any rate, all distinguished by their intelligence. It was an interesting and useful house for a young man, and especially a young politician, to frequent. Endymion heard many things and learnt many things which otherwise would not have met his ear or mind. The prince encouraged conversation, though himself inclined to taciturnity. When he did speak, his terse remarks and condensed views were striking, and were remembered. On the days on which he did not receive, the prince dined at the Travellers' Club, to which Waldershare had obtained his introduction, and generally with Waldershare, who took this opportunity of gradually making his friend acquainted with eminent and influential men, many of whom in due time became guests at Carlton Terrace. It was clear, indeed, that these club-dinners were part of a system.

The prince, soon after his arrival in town, while riding, had passed Lady Roehampton's carriage in the park, and he had saluted her with a grave grace which distinguished him. She was surprised at feeling a little agitated by this rencontre. It recalled Hainault, her not mortifying but still humble position beneath that roof, the prince's courtesy to her under those circumstances, and, indeed, his marked preference for her society.

She felt it something like ingratitude to treat him with neglect now, when her position was so changed and had become so elevated. She mentioned to Lord Roehampton, while they were dining alone, that she should like to invite the prince to her receptions, and asked his opinion on the point. Lord Roehampton shrugged his shoulders and did not encourage her. 'You know, my darling, our people do not much like him. They look upon him as a pretender, as having forfeited his parole, and as a refugee from justice. I have no prejudices against him myself, and perhaps in the same situation might have acted in the same manner; but if he is to be admitted into society, it should hardly be at a ministerial reception, and of all houses, that of one who holds my particular post.'

'I know nothing about his forfeiting his parole,' said Lady Roehampton; 'the charge is involved in mystery, and Mr. Waldershare told me it was an entire fabrication. As for his being a pretender, he seems to me as legitimate a prince as most we meet; he was born in the purple, and his father was recognised by every government in Europe except our own. As for being a refugee from justice, a prince in captivity has certainly a right to escape if he can, and his escape was romantic. However, I will not contest any decision of yours, for I think you are always right. Only I am disappointed, for, to say nothing of the unkindness, I cannot help feeling our not noticing him is rather shabby.'

There was silence, a longer silence than usually occurred in *tête-à-tête* dinners between Lord and Lady Roehampton. To break the silence he began to converse on another subject, and Lady Roehampton replied to him cheerfully, but curtly. He saw she was vexed, and this great man, who was at that time meditating one of the most daring acts of modern diplomacy, who had the reputation, in the conduct of public affairs, of not only being courageous, but of being stern, inflexible, unfeeling, and unscrupulous beyond ordinary statesmen, who had passed his mornings in writing a menacing despatch to a great power and intimating combinations to the ambassadors of other first-rate states which they almost trembled to receive, was quite upset by seeing his wife chagrined. At last, after another embarrass-

ing pause, he said gaily, 'Do you know, my dear Myra, I do not see why you should not ask Prince Florestan. It is you that ask him, not I. That is one of the pleasant results of our system of political entertainments. The guests come to pay their respects to the lady of the house, so no one is committed. The prince may visit you on Wednesday just as well as the leaders of the opposition who want our places, or the malcontent Radicals who they say are going to turn us out.'

So Prince Florestan was invited to Lady Roehampton's receptions, and he came; and he never missed one. His visits were brief. He appeared, made his bow, had the pleasure of some slight conversation with her, and then soon retired. Received by Lady Roehampton, in time, though sluggishly, invitations arrived from other houses, but he rarely availed himself of them. He maintained in this respect great reserve, and was accustomed to say that the only fine lady in London who had ever been kind to him was Lady Roehampton.

All this time Endymion, who was now thoroughly planted in society, saw a great deal of the Neuchatels, who had returned to Portland Place at the beginning of February. He met Adriana almost every evening, and was frequently invited to the house—to the grand dinners now, as well as the domestic circle. In short, our Endymion was fast becoming a young man of fashion and a personage. The brother of Lady Roehampton had now become the private secretary of Mr. Sydney Wilton and the great friend of Lady Montfort. He was indeed only one of the numerous admirers of that lady, but he seemed not the least smiled on. There was never anything delightful at Montfort House at which he was not present, or indeed in any other place, for under her influence, invitations from the most distinguished houses crowded his mantelpiece and were stuck all round his looking-glass. Endymion in this whirl of life did not forget his old friends. He took care that Seymour Hicks should have a frequent invitation to Lady Roehampton's assemblies. Seymour Hicks only wanted a lever to raise the globe, and this introduction supplied him with one. It was astonishing how he made his way in society, and though, of course, he never touched the empyrean regions in which Endymion now

breathed, he gradually, and at last rapidly, planted himself in a world which to the uninitiated figures as the very realm of nobility and fashion, and where doubtless is found a great fund of splendour, refinement, and amusement. Seymour Hicks was not ill-favoured, and was always well dressed, and he was very civil, but what he really owed his social advancement to was his indomitable will. That quality governs all things, and though the will of Seymour Hicks was directed to what many may deem a petty or a contracted purpose, life is always interesting when you have a purpose and live in its fulfilment. It appeared from what he told Endymion that matters at the office had altered a good deal since he left it. The retirement of St. Barbe was the first brick out of the wall; now, which Endymion had not yet heard, the brother of Trenchard had most unexpectedly died, and that gentleman come into a good estate. 'Jawett remains, and is also the editor of the "Precursor," but his new labours so absorb his spare time that he is always at the office of the paper. So it is pretty well all over with the table at Joe's. I confess I could not stand it any longer, particularly after you left. I have got into the junior Pan-Ionian; and I am down for the senior; I cannot get in for ten years, but when I do it will be a *coup;* the society there is tiptop, a cabinet minister sometimes, and very often a bishop.'

CHAPTER LVI.

ENDYMION was glad to meet Baron Sergius one day when he dined with Prince Florestan. There were several distinguished foreigners among the guests, who had just arrived. They talked much, and with much emphasis. One of them, the Marquis of Vallombrosa, expatiated on the Latin race, their great qualities, their vivacity, invention, vividness of perception, chivalrous valour, and sympathy with tradition. The northern races detested them, and the height of statesmanship was to combine the Latin races into an organised and active alliance against the barbarism which menaced them. There had been for a short time a vacant place next to Endymion, when Baron Sergius,

according to his quiet manner, stole into the room and slipped into the unoccupied seat. 'It is some time since we met,' he said, 'but I have heard of you. You are now a public man, and not a public character. That is a not unsatisfactory position.'

The prince listened apparently with much interest to the Marquis of Vallombrosa, occasionally asked him a question, and promoted discussion without himself giving any opinion. Baron Sergius never spoke except to Endymion, and then chiefly social inquiries about Lord and Lady Roehampton, their good friends the Neuchatels, and frequently about Mr. Sidney Wilton, whom, it appeared, he had known years ago, and intimately. After dinner the guests, on the return to the saloon, ranged themselves in a circle, but not too formally, and the prince moving round addressed each of them in turn. When this royal ceremony was concluded, the prince motioned to the Marquis of Vallombrosa to accompany him, and then they repaired to an adjacent saloon, the door of which was open, but where they could converse without observation. The Duke of St. Angelo amused the remaining guests with all the resources of a man practised in making people feel at their ease, and in this he was soon greatly assisted by Mr. Waldershare, who was unable to dine with the prince to-day, but who seemed to take much interest in this arrival of the representatives of the Latin race.

Baron Sergius and Endymion were sitting together rather apart from the rest. The baron said, 'You have heard to-day a great deal about the Latin race, their wondrous qualities, their peculiar destiny, their possible danger. It is a new idea, or rather a new phrase, that I observe is now getting into the political world, and is probably destined to produce consequences. No man will treat with indifference the principle of race. It is the key of history, and why history is often so confused is that it has been written by men who were ignorant of this principle and all the knowledge it involves. As one who may become a statesman and assist in governing mankind, it is necessary that you should not be insensible to it; whether you encounter its influence in communities or in individuals, its qualities must ever be taken into account. But there is no subject which more requires discriminating knowledge, or where your illustrating

principle, if you are not deeply founded, may not chance to turn out a will-o'-the-wisp. Now this great question of the Latin race, by which M. de Vallombrosa may succeed in disturbing the world—it might be well to inquire where the Latin race is to be found. In the North of Italy, peopled by Germans and named after Germans, or in the South of Italy, swarming with the descendants of Normans and Arabs? Shall we find the Latin race in Spain, stocked by Goths, and Moors, and Jews? Or in France, where there is a great Celtic nation, occasionally mingled with Franks? Now I do not want to go into the origin of man and nations—I am essentially practical, and only endeavour to comprehend that with which I have personally to deal, and that is sufficiently difficult. In Europe I find three great races with distinct qualities—the Teutons, the Sclaves, and the Celts; and their conduct will be influenced by those distinctive qualities. There is another great race which influences the world, the Semites. Certainly, when I was at the Congress of Vienna, I did not believe that the Arabs were more likely to become a conquering race again than the Tartars, and yet it is a question at this moment whether Mehemet Ali, at their head, may not found a new empire in the Mediterranean. The Semites are unquestionably a great race, for among the few things in this world which appear to be certain, nothing is more sure than that they invented our alphabet. But the Semites now exercise a vast influence over affairs by their smallest though most peculiar family, the Jews. There is no race gifted with so much tenacity, and such skill in organisation. These qualities have given them an unprecedented hold over property and illimitable credit. As you advance in life, and get experience in affairs, the Jews will cross you everywhere. They have long been stealing into our secret diplomacy, which they have almost appropriated; in another quarter of a century they will claim their share of open government. Well, these are races; men and bodies of men influenced in their conduct by their particular organisation, and which must enter into all the calculations of a statesman. But what do they mean by the Latin race? Language and religion do not make a race—there is only one thing which makes a race, and that is blood.'

'But the prince,' said Endymion inquiringly; 'he seemed much interested in what M. de Vallombrosa was saying; I should like to know what his opinions are about the Latin race.'

'The prince rarely gives an opinion,' said the baron. 'Indeed, as you well know, he rarely speaks; he thinks and he acts.'

'But if he acts on wrong information,' continued Endymion, 'there will probably be only one consequence.'

'The prince is very wise,' said the baron; 'and, trust me, knows as much about mankind, and the varieties of mankind, as any one. He may not believe in the Latin race, but he may choose to use those who do believe in it. The weakness of the prince, if he have one, is not want of knowledge, or want of judgment, but an over-confidence in his star, which sometimes seduces him into enterprises which he himself feels at the time are not perfectly sound.'

CHAPTER LVII.

THE interest of the town was now divided between the danger of the government and the new preacher who electrified the world at St. Rosicrucius. The Rev. Nigel Penruddock was not at all a popular preacher according to the vulgar acceptation of the term. He disdained all cant and clap-trap. He preached Church principles with commanding eloquence, and he practised them with unceasing devotion. His church was always open, yet his schools were never neglected; there was a perfect choir, a staff of disciplined curates, young and ascetic, while sacred sisters, some of patrician blood, fearless and prepared for martyrdom, were gliding about all the back slums of his ferocious neighbourhood. How came the Whigs to give such a church to such a person? There must have been some mistake. But how came it that all the Whig ladies were among the most devoted of his congregation? The government whips did not like it; at such a critical period too, when it was necessary to keep the Dissenters up to the mark! And there was Lady Montfort and Lady Rochampton never absent on a Sunday, and their carriages, it was whispered, were often suspiciously near to

St. Rosicrucius on week-days. Mr. Sidney Wilton too was frequently in Lady Roehampton's pew, and one day, absolutely my lord himself, who unfortunately was rarely seen at church—but then, as is well known, critical despatches always arrive on a Sunday morning—was successfully landed in her pew by Lady Roehampton, and was very much struck indeed by what he heard. 'The fact is,' as he afterwards observed, 'I wish we had such a fellow on our bench in the House of Commons.'

About this time also there was another event, which, although not of so general an interest, much touched the feelings of Endymion, and this was the marriage of the Earl of Beaumaris with Imogene. It was solemnised in as private and quiet a manner as possible. Waldershare was the best man, and there were no bridesmaids. The only other persons invited by Mr. Rodney, who gave away the bride, were Endymion and Mr. Vigo.

One morning, a few days before the wedding, Sylvia, who had written to ask Lady Roehampton for an interview, called by appointment in St. James' Square. Sylvia was received by Lady Roehampton in her boudoir, and the interview was long. Sylvia, who by nature was composed, and still more so by art, was pale and nervous when she arrived, so much so that her demeanour was noticed by the groom of the chambers; but when she departed, her countenance was flushed and radiant, though it was obvious that she had been shedding tears. On the morning of the wedding, Lady Roehampton in her lord's brougham called for Endymion at the Albany, and then they went together to the vestry of St. James' Church. Lord Beaumaris and Mr. Waldershare had arrived. The bridegroom was a little embarrassed when he was presented to Lady Roehampton. He had made up his mind to be married, but not to be introduced to a stranger, and particularly a lady; but Mr. Waldershare fluttered over them and put all right. It was only the perplexity of a moment, for the rest of the wedding party now appeared. Imogene, who was in a travelling dress, was pale and serious, but transcendently beautiful. She attempted to touch Lady Roehampton's hand with her lips when Myra welcomed her, but Lady Roehampton would not permit this and kissed her. Everybody was calm during the ceremony except Endymion, who had been silent the whole morning. He

stood by the altar with that convulsion of the throat and that sickness of the heart which accompany the sense of catastrophe. He was relieved by some tears which he easily concealed. Nobody noticed him, for all were thinking of themselves. After the ceremony, they all returned to the vestry, and Lady Roehampton with the others signed the registry. Lord and Lady Beaumaris instantly departed for the continent.

'A strange event!' exclaimed Lady Roehampton, as she threw herself back in the brougham and took her brother's hand. 'But not stranger than what has happened to ourselves. Fortune seems to attend on our ruined home. I thought the bride looked beautiful.'

Endymion was silent.

'You are not gay this morning, my dear,' said Lady Roehampton; 'they say that weddings are depressing. Now I am in rather high spirits. I am very glad that Imogene has become Lady Beaumaris. She is beautiful, and dangerously beautiful. Do you know, my Endymion, I have had some uneasy moments about this young lady. Women are prescient in these matters, and I have observed with anxiety that you admired her too much yourself.'

'I am sure you had no reason, Myra,' said Endymion, blushing deeply.

'Certainly not from what you said, my dear. It was from what you did not say that I became alarmed. You seldom mentioned her name, and when I referred to her, you always turned the conversation. However, that is all over now. She is Countess of Beaumaris,' added Myra, dwelling slowly and with some unction on the title, 'and may be a powerful friend to you; and I am Countess of Roehampton, and am your friend, also not quite devoid of power. And there are other countesses, I suspect, on whose good wishes you may rely. If we cannot shape your destiny, there is no such thing as witchcraft. No, Endymion, marriage is a mighty instrument in your hands. It must not be lightly used. Come in and lunch; my lord is at home, and I know he wants to see you.'

CHAPTER LVIII.

What was most remarkable, and most interesting, in the character of Berengaria was her energy. She had the power of exciting others to action in a degree rarely possessed. She had always some considerable object in contemplation, occasionally more than one, and never foresaw difficulties. Her character was, however, singularly feminine; she never affected to be a superior woman. She never reasoned, did not read much, though her literary taste was fine and fastidious. Though she required constant admiration and consequently encouraged it, she was not a heartless coquette. Her sensibility was too quick, and as the reign of her favourites was sometimes brief, she was looked upon as capricious. The truth is, what seemed whimsical in her affections was occasioned by the subtlety of her taste, which was not always satisfied by the increased experience of intimacy. Whenever she made a friend not unworthy of her, she was constant and entirely devoted.

At present, Berengaria had two great objects; one was to sustain the Whig government in its troubles, and the other was to accomplish an unprecedented feat in modern manners, and that was no less than to hold a tournament, a real tournament, in the autumn, at the famous castle of her lord in the North of England.

The lord-lieutenant had not been in his county for two years; he had even omitted to celebrate Christmas at his castle, which had shocked everybody, for its revelry was looked upon almost as the tenure by which the Montforts held their estates. His plea of ill health, industriously circulated by all his agents, obtained neither sympathy nor credence. His county was rather a weak point with Lord Montfort, for though he could not bear his home, he was fond of power, and power depended on his territorial influence. The representation of his county by his family, and authority in the local parliamentary boroughs, were the compensations held out to him for the abolition of his nomination seats. His wife dexterously availed herself of this state of affairs to obtain his assent to her great project,

which, it would appear, might not only amuse him, but, in its unprecedented magnificence and novelty, must sweep away all discontents, and gratify every class.

Lord Montfort had placed unlimited resources at the disposal of Berengaria for the fulfilment of her purpose, and at times even showed some not inconsiderable though fitful interest in her progress. He turned over the drawings of the various costumes and armour with a gracious smile, and, having picked up on such subjects a great deal of knowledge, occasionally made suggestions which were useful and sometimes embarrassing. The heralds were all called into council, and Garter himself deigned to regulate the order of proceedings. Some of the finest gentlemen in London, of both parties in the state, passed the greater part of their spring mornings in jousting, and in practising all the manœuvres of the lists. Lady Montfort herself was to be the Queen of the Tournament, and she had prevailed on Lady Roehampton to accept the supreme office of Queen of Beauty.

It was the early part of May, and Zenobia held one of her great assemblies. Being in high good humour, sanguine and prophetic of power, she had asked all the great Whig ladies, and, the times being critical, they had come. Berengaria seemed absorbed by the details of her tournament. She met many of her knights, and she conferred with them all; the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, the Knight of Roses, the Knight of the Crystal Shield.

Endymion, who was not to be a knight, but a gentleman-at-arms in attendance on the Queen of the Tournament, mentioned that Prince Florestan much wished to be a jouster; he had heard this from the Duke of St. Angelo, and Lady Montfort, though she did not immediately sanction, did not absolutely refuse, the request.

Past midnight, there was a sudden stir in the saloons. The House of Commons had broken up and many members were entering. There had been a division on the Jamaica question, and the ministers had only a majority of five. The leader of the House of Commons had intimated, not to say announced, their consequent resignation.

'Have you heard what they say?' said Endymion anxiously to Lady Montfort.

'Yes, I heard; but do not look so grave.'

'Do I look grave?'

'As if it were the last day.'

'I fear it is.'

'I am not so sure. I doubt whether Sir Robert thinks it ripe enough; and after all, we are not in a minority. I do not see why we should have resigned. I wish I could see Lord Roehampton.'

Affairs did not proceed so rapidly as the triumphant Zenobia expected. They were out, no question about that; but it was not so certain who was in. A day passed and another day, and even Zenobia, who knew everything before anybody, remained in the dark. The suspense became protracted and even more mysterious. Almost a week had elapsed; noble lords and right honourable gentlemen were calling on Sir Robert every morning, according to the newspapers, but no one could hear from any authority of any appointment being really made. At last, there was a whisper very late one night at Crockford's, which was always better informed on these matters than the political clubs, and people looked amazed, and stared incredulously in each other's face. But it was true; there was a hitch, and in four-and-twenty hours the cause of the hitch was known. It seemed that the ministry really had resigned, but Berengaria, Countess of Montfort, had not followed their example.

What a dangerous woman! even wicked! Zenobia was for sending her to the Tower at once. 'It was clearly impossible,' she declared, 'for Sir Robert to carry on affairs with such a Duchesse de Longueville always at the ear of our young Queen, under the pretence forsooth of being the friend of Her Majesty's youth.'

This was the famous Bed-Chamber Plot, in which the Conservative leaders, as is now generally admitted, were decidedly in error, and which terminated in the return of the Whigs to office.

'But we must reconstruct,' said Lady Montfort to the prime minister. 'Sidney Wilton must be Secretary of State. And

you,' she said to Endymion, when she communicated to him the successful result of her interference, 'you will go with him. It is a great thing at your age to be private secretary to a Secretary of State.'

CHAPTER LIX.

Montfort Castle was the stronghold of England against the Scotch invader. It stood on a high and vast table-land, with the town of Montfort on one side at its feet, and on the other a wide-spreading and sylvan domain, herded with deer of various races, and terminating in pine forests; beyond them moors and mountains. The donjon keep, tall and grey, that had arrested the Douglas, still remained intact, and many an ancient battlement; but the long list of the Lords of Montfort had successively added to the great structure according to the genius of the times, so that still with the external appearance generally of a feudal castle, it combined in its various courts and quadrangles all the splendour and convenience of a modern palace.

But though it had witnessed many scenes and sights, and as strange ones as any old walls in this ancient land, it may be doubted whether the keep of Montfort ever looked down on anything more rare than the life that was gathering and disporting itself in its towers and halls, and courts and parks, and forest chase, in the memorable autumn of this year.

Berengaria had repaired to her castle full of triumph; her lord, in high good humour, admiring his wife for her energy, yet with a playful malice apparently enjoying the opportunity of showing that the chronology of her arrangements was confused, and her costume incorrect. They had good-naturedly taken Endymion down with them; for travelling to the Border in those times was a serious affair for a clerk in a public office. Day after day the other guests arrived; the rivals in the tourney were among the earliest, for they had to make themselves acquainted with the land which was to be the scene of their exploits. There came the Knights of the Griffin, and the Dragon, and the Black Lion and the Golden Lion, and the

Dolphin and the Stag's Head, and they were all always scrupulously addressed by their chivalric names, instead of by the Tommys and the Jemmys that circulated in the affectionate circle of White's, or the Gusseys and the Regys of Belgravian tea-parties. After a time duly appeared the Knight of the White Rose, whose armour shielded the princely form of Florestan; and this portion of the company was complete when the Black Knight at length reached the castle, who had been detained by his attendance on a conference at St. James', in the character of the Count of Ferroll.

If anything could add to the delight and excitement of Berengaria, it would seem to be the arrival of the Count of Ferroll.

Other guests gradually appeared, who were to sustain other characters in the great pageant. There was the Judge of Peace, and the Knight Marshal of the Lists, and the Jester, who was to ride on a caparisoned mule trapped with bells, and himself bearing a sceptre. Mr. Sidney Wilton came down, who had promised to be King of the Tournament; and, though rather late, for my lord had been detained by the same cause as the Count of Ferroll, at length arrived the Queen of Beauty herself.

If the performance, to which all contiguous Britain intended to repair—for irrespective of the railroads, which now began sensibly to affect the communications in the North of England, steamers were chartering from every port for passengers to the Montfort tournament within one hundred miles' distance—were equal to the preparation, the affair must be a great success. The grounds round the castle seemed to be filled every day with groups of busy persons in fanciful costume, all practising their duties and rehearsing their parts; swordsmen and bowmen, and seneschals and esquires, and grooms and pages, and heralds in tabards, and pursuivants, and banner-bearers. The splendid pavilions of the knights were now completed, and the gorgeous throne of the Queen of Beauty, surrounded by crimson galleries, tier above tier, for thousands of favoured guests, were receiving only their last stroke of magnificence. The mornings passed in a feverish whirl of curiosity, and preparation, and excitement, and some anxiety. Then succeeded the banquet, where nearly one hundred guests were every day present; but the company

were so absorbed in the impending event that none expected or required, in the evenings, any of the usual schemes or sources of amusement that abound in country houses. Comments on the morning, and plans for the morrow, engrossed all thought and conversation, and my lord's band was just a due accompaniment that filled the pauses when perplexities arrested talk, or deftly blended with some whispered phrase almost as sweet or thrilling as the notes of the cornet-à-piston.

'I owe my knighthood to you,' said Prince Florestan to Lady Roehampton, 'as I do everything in this country that is agreeable.'

'You cannot be my knight,' replied Lady Roehampton, 'because I am told I am the sovereign of all the chivalry, but you have my best wishes.'

'All that I want in life,' said the prince, 'are your good wishes.'

'I fear they are barren.'

'No, they are inspiring,' said the prince with unusual feeling. 'You brought me good fortune. From the moment I saw you, light fell upon my life.'

'Is not that an exaggerated phrase?' said Lady Roehampton with a smile, 'because I happened to get you a ticket for a masquerade.'

'I was thinking of something else,' said the prince pensively; 'but life is a masquerade; at least mine has been.'

'I think yours, sir, is a most interesting life,' said Lady Roehampton, 'and, were I you, I would not quarrel with my destiny.'

'My destiny is not fulfilled,' said the prince. 'I have never quarrelled with it, and am least disposed to do so at this moment.'

'Mr. Sidney Wilton was speaking to me very much the other day about your royal mother, sir, Queen Agrippina. She must have been fascinating.'

'I like fascinating women,' said the prince, 'but they are rare.'

'Perhaps it is better it should be so,' said Lady Roehampton, 'for they are apt—are they not?—to disturb the world.'

'I confess I like to be bewitched,' said the prince, 'and I do not care how much the world is disturbed.'

'But is not the world very well as it is?' said Lady Roehampton. 'Why should we not be happy and enjoy it?'

'I do enjoy it,' replied Prince Florestan, 'especially at Montfort Castle; I suppose there is something in the air that agrees with one. But enjoyment of the present is consistent with objects for the future.'

'Ah! now you are thinking of your great affairs—of your kingdom. My woman's brain is not equal to that.'

'I think your brain is quite equal to kingdoms,' said the prince, with a serious expression, and speaking in even a lower voice, 'but I was not thinking of my kingdom. I leave that to fate; I believe it is destined to be mine, and therefore occasions me thought but not anxiety. I was thinking of something else than kingdoms, and of which unhappily I am not so certain—of which I am most uncertain—of which I fear I have no chance—and yet which is dearer to me than even my crown.'

'What can that be?' said Lady Roehampton, with unaffected wonderment.

''Tis a secret of chivalry,' said Prince Florestan, 'and I must never disclose it.'

'It is a wonderful scene,' said Adriana Neuchatel to Endymion, who had been for some time conversing with her. 'I had no idea that I should be so much amused by anything in society. But then, it is so unlike anything one has ever seen.'

Mrs. Neuchatel had not accompanied her husband and her daughter to the Montfort Tournament. Mr. Neuchatel required a long holiday, and after the tournament he was to take Adriana to Scotland. Mrs. Neuchatel shut herself up at Hainault, which it seemed she had never enjoyed before. She could hardly believe it was the same place, freed from its daily invasions by the House of Commons and the Stock Exchange. She had never lived so long without seeing an ambassador or a cabinet minister, and it was quite a relief. She wandered in the gardens, and drove her pony-chair in forest glades. She missed Adriana very much, and for a few days always expected her to enter the room when the door opened; and then she sighed, and

then she flew to her easel, or buried herself in some sublime cantata of her favourite master, Beethoven. Then came the most wonderful performance of the whole day, and that was the letter, never missed, to Adriana. Considering that she lived in solitude, and in a spot with which her daughter was quite familiar, it was really marvellous that the mother should every day be able to fill so many interesting and impassioned pages. But Mrs. Neuchatel was a fine penwoman; her feelings were her facts, and her ingenious observations of art and nature were her news. After the first fever of separation, reading was always a resource to her, for she was a great student. She was surrounded by all the literary journals and choice publications of Europe, and there scarcely was a branch of science and learning with which she was not sufficiently familiar to be able to comprehend the stir and progress of the European mind. Mrs. Neuchatel had contrived to get rid of the chief cook by sending him on a visit to Paris, so she could, without cavil, dine off a cutlet and seltzer-water in her boudoir. Sometimes, not merely for distraction, but more from a sense of duty, she gave festivals to her schools; and when she had lived like a princely prisoner of state alone for a month, or rather like one on a desert isle who sighs to see a sail, she would ask a great geologist and his wife to pay her a visit, or some professor, who, though himself not worth a shilling, had some new plans, which really sounded quite practical, for the more equal distribution of wealth.

'And who is your knight?' said Endymion.

Adriana looked distressed.

'I mean, whom do you wish to win?'

'Oh, I should like them all to win!'

'That is good-natured, but then there would be no distinction. I know who is going to wear your colours—the Knight of the Dolphin.'

'I hope nothing of that kind will happen,' said Adriana, agitated. 'I know that some of the knights are going to wear ladies' colours, but I trust no one will think of wearing mine. I know the Black Knight wears Lady Montfort's.'

'He cannot,' said Endymion hastily. 'She is first lady to the Queen of Beauty; no knight can wear the colours of the

Queen. I asked Sir Morte d'Arthur himself, and he told me there was no doubt about it, and that he had consulted Garter before he came down.'

'Well, all I know is that the Count of Ferroll told me so,' said Adriana; 'I sate next to him at dinner.'

'He shall not wear her colours,' said Endymion quite angrily. 'I will speak to the King of the Tournament about it directly.'

'Why, what does it signify?' said Adriana.

'You thought it signified when I told you Regy Sutton was going to wear your colours.'

'Ah! that is quite a different business,' said Adriana, with a sigh.

Reginald Sutton was a professed admirer of Adriana, rode with her whenever he could, and danced with her immensely. She gave him cold encouragement, though he was the best-looking and best-dressed youth in England; but he was a determined young hero, not gifted with too sensitive nerves, and was a votary of the great theory that all in life was an affair of will, and that endowed with sufficient energy he might marry whom he liked. He accounted for his slow advance in London by the inimical presence of Mrs. Neuchatel, who he felt, or fancied, did not sympathise with him; while, on the contrary, he got on very well with the father, and so he was determined to seize the present opportunity. The mother was absent, and he himself in a commanding position, being one of the knights to whose exploits the eyes of all England were attracted.

Lord Rochampton was seated between an ambassadress and Berengaria, indulging in gentle and sweet-voiced raillery; the Count of Ferroll was standing beside Lady Montfort, and Mr. Wilton was opposite to the group. The Count of Ferroll rarely spoke, but listened to Lady Montfort with what she called one of his dark smiles.

'All I know is, she will never pardon you for not asking her,' said Lord Rochampton. 'I saw Bicester the day I left town, and he was very grumpy. He said that Lady Bicester was the only person who understood tournaments. She had studied the subject.'

'I suppose she wanted to be the Queen of Beauty,' said Berengaria.

'You are too severe, my dear lady. I think she would have been contented with a knight wearing her colours.'

'Well, I cannot help it,' said Berengaria, but somewhat doubtingly. And then, after a moment's pause, 'She is too ugly.'

'Why, she came to my fancy ball, and it is not five years ago, as Mary Queen of Scots!'

'That must have been after the Queen's decapitation,' said Berengaria.

'I wonder you did not ask Zenobia,' said Mr. Wilton.

'Of course I asked her, but I knew she would not come. She is in one of her hatreds now. She said she would have come, only she had half-promised to give a ball to the tenants at Merrington about that time, and she did not like to disappoint them. Quite touching, was it not?'

'A touch beyond the reach of art,' said Mr. Wilton; 'almost worthy of yourself, Lady Montfort.'

'And what do you think of all this?' asked Lord Montfort of Nigel Penruddock, who, in a cassock that swept the ground, had been stalking about the glittering saloons like a prophet who had been ordained in Mayfair, but who had now seated himself by his host.

'I am thinking of what is beneath all this,' replied Nigel. 'A great revivification. Chivalry is the child of the Church; it is the distinctive feature of Christian Europe. Had it not been for the revival of Church principles, this glorious pageant would never have occurred. But it is a pageant only to the uninitiated. There is not a ceremony, a form, a phrase, a costume, which is not symbolic of a great truth or a high purpose.'

'I do not think Lady Montfort is aware of all this,' said her lord.

'Oh yes!' said Nigel. 'Lady Montfort is a great woman—a woman who could inspire crusades and create churches. She might, and she will, I trust, rank with the Helenas and the Matildas.'

Lord Montfort gave a little sound, but so gentle that it was heard probably but by himself, which in common language would be styled a whistle—an articulate modulation of the breath which in this instance expressed a sly sentiment of humorous amazement.

'Well, Mr. Ferrars,' said Mr. Neuchatel, with a laughing eye, to that young gentleman, as he encountered Endymion passing by, 'and how are you getting on? Are we to see you to-morrow in a Milanese suit?'

'I am only a page,' said Endymion.

'Well, well, the old Italian saying is, "A page beats a knight," at least with the ladies.'

'Do not you think it very absurd,' said Endymion, 'that the Count of Ferroll says he shall wear Lady Montfort's colours? Lady Montfort is only the first lady of the Queen of Beauty, and she can wear no colours except the Queen's. Do not you think somebody ought to interfere?'

'Hem! The Count of Ferroll is a man who seldom makes a mistake,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'So everybody says,' said Endymion rather testily; 'but I do not see that.'

'Now, you are a very young man,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'and I hope you will some day be a statesman. I do not see why you should not, if you are industrious and stick to your master, for Mr. Sidney Wilton is a man who will always rise; but, if I were you, I would keep my eyes very much on the Count of Ferroll, for, depend on it, he is one of those men who sooner or later will make a noise in the world.'

Adriana came up at this moment, leaning on the arm of the Knight of the Dolphin, better known as Regy Sutton. They came from the tea-room. Endymion moved away with a cloud on his brow, murmuring to himself, 'I am quite sick of the name of the Count of Ferroll.'

The jousting-ground was about a mile from the castle, and though it was nearly encircled by vast and lofty galleries, it was impossible that accommodation could be afforded on this spot to the thousands who had repaired from many parts of the kingdom to the Montfort Tournament. But even a hundred

thousand people could witness the procession from the castle to the scene of action. That was superb. The sun shone, and not one of the breathless multitude was disappointed.

There came a long line of men-at-arms and musicians and trumpeters and banner-bearers of the Lord of the Tournament, and heralds in tabards, and pursuivants, and then the Herald of the Tournament by himself, whom the people at first mistook for the Lord Mayor.

Then came the Knight Marshal on a caparisoned steed, himself in a suit of gilt armour, and in a richly-embroidered surcoat. A band of halberdiers preceded the King of the Tournament, also on a steed richly caparisoned, and himself clad in robes of velvet and ermine, and wearing a golden crown.

Then on a barded Arab, herself dressed in cloth of gold, particoloured with violet and crimson, came, amidst tremendous cheering, the Queen of Beauty herself. Twelve attendants bore aloft a silken canopy, which did not conceal from the enraptured multitude the lustre of her matchless loveliness. Lady Montfort, Adriana, and four other attendant ladies, followed her majesty, two by two, each in gorgeous attire, and on a charger that vied in splendour with its mistress. Six pages followed next, in violet and silver.

The bells of a barded mule announced the Jester, who waved his sceptre with unceasing authority, and pelted the people with admirably prepared impromptus. Some in the crowd tried to enter into a competition of banter, but they were always vanquished.

Soon a large company of men-at-arms and the sounds of most triumphant music stopped the general laughter, and all became again hushed in curious suspense. The tallest and the stoutest of the Border men bore the gonfalon of the Lord of the Tournament. That should have been Lord Montfort himself; but he had deputed the office to his cousin and presumptive heir. Lord Montfort was well represented, and the people cheered his cousin Odo heartily, as in his suit of golden armour richly chased, and bending on his steed, caparisoned in blue and gold, he acknowledged their fealty with a proud reverence.

The other knights followed in order, all attended by their

esquires and their grooms. Each knight was greatly applauded, and it was really a grand sight to see them on their barded chargers and in their panoply; some in suits of engraved Milanese armour, some in German suits of fluted polished steel; some in steel armour engraved and inlaid with gold. The Black Knight was much cheered, but no one commanded more admiration than Prince Florestan, in a suit of blue damascened armour, and inlaid with silver roses.

Every procession must end. It is a pity, for there is nothing so popular with mankind. The splendid part of the pageant had passed, but still the people gazed and looked as if they would have gazed for ever. The visitors at the castle, all in ancient costume, attracted much notice. Companies of swordsmen and bowmen followed, till at last the seneschal of the castle, with his chamberlains and servitors, closed the spell-bound scene.

CHAPTER LX.

The jousting was very successful; though some were necessarily discomfited, almost every one contrived to obtain some distinction. But the two knights who excelled and vanquished every one except themselves were the Black Knight and the Knight of the White Rose. Their exploits were equal at the close of the first day, and on the second they were to contend for the principal prize of the tournament, for which none else were entitled to be competitors. This was a golden helm, to be placed upon the victor's brow by the Queen of Beauty.

There was both a banquet and a ball on this day, and the excitement between the adventures of the morning and the prospects of the morrow was great. The knights, freed from their armour, appeared in fanciful dresses of many-coloured velvets. All who had taken part in the pageant retained their costumes, and the ordinary guests, if they yielded to mediæval splendour, successfully asserted the taste of Paris and its sparkling grace, in their exquisite robes, and wreaths and garlands of fantastic loveliness.

Berengaria, full of the inspiration of success, received the smiling congratulations of everybody, and repaid them with happy suggestions, which she poured forth with inexhaustible yet graceful energy. The only person who had a gloomy air was Endymion. She rallied him. 'I shall call you the Knight of the Woeful Countenance if you approach me with such a visage. What can be the matter with you?'

'Nothing,' said Endymion in a tone of sullen misery.

'There is something. I know your countenance too well to be deceived. What is the matter?'

'Nothing,' repeated Endymion, looking rather away.

The Knight of the Dolphin came up and said, 'This is a critical affair to-morrow, my dear Lady Montfort. If the Count of Ferroll is discomfited by the prince, it may be a *casus belli*. You ought to get Lord Roehampton to interfere and prevent the encounter.'

'The Count of Ferroll will not be discomfited,' said Lady Montfort. 'He is one of those men who never fail.'

'Well, I do not know,' said the Knight of the Dolphin musingly. 'The prince has a stout lance, and I have felt it.'

'He had the best of it this morning,' said Endymion rather bitterly. 'Every one thought so, and that it was very fortunate for the Count of Ferroll that the heralds closed the lists.'

'It might have been fortunate for others,' rejoined Lady Montfort. 'What is the general opinion?' she added, addressing the Knight of the Dolphin. 'Do not go away, Mr. Ferrars. I want to give you some directions about to-morrow.'

'I do not think I shall be at the place to-morrow,' muttered Endymion.

'What!' exclaimed Berengaria; but at this moment Mr. Sidney Wilton came up and said, 'I have been looking at the golden helm. It is entrusted to my care as King of the Tournament. It is really so beautiful, that I think I shall usurp it.'

'You will have to settle that with the Count of Ferroll,' said Berengaria.

'The betting is about equal,' said the Knight of the Dolphin.

'Well, we must have some gloves upon it,' said Berengaria.

Endymion walked away.

He walked away, and the first persons that met his eye were the prince and the Count of Ferroll in conversation. It was sickening. They seemed quite gay, and occasionally examined together a paper which the prince held in his hand, and which was an official report by the heralds of the day's jousting. This friendly conversation might apparently have gone on for ever had not the music ceased and the count been obliged to seek his partner for the coming dance.

'I wonder you can speak to him,' said Endymion, going up to the prince. 'If the heralds had not—many think, too hastily—closed the lists this morning, you would have been the victor of the day.'

'My dear child! what can you mean?' said the prince. 'I believe everything was closed quite properly, and as for myself, I am entirely satisfied with my share of the day's success.'

'If you had thrown him,' said Endymion, 'he could not with decency have contended for the golden helm.'

'Oh! that is what you deplore,' said the prince. 'The Count of Ferroll and I shall have to contend for many things more precious than golden helms before we die.'

'I believe he is a very overrated man,' said Endymion.

'Why?' said the prince.

'I detest him,' said Endymion.

'That is certainly a reason why *you* should not overrate him,' said the prince.

'There seems a general conspiracy to run him up,' said Endymion with pique.

'The Count of Ferroll is the man of the future,' said the prince calmly.

'That is what Mr. Neuchatel said to me yesterday. I suppose he caught it from you.'

'It is an advantage, a great advantage, for me to observe the Count of Ferroll in this intimate society,' said the prince, speaking slowly, 'perhaps even to fathom him. But I am not come to that yet. He is a man neither to love nor to detest. He has himself an intelligence superior to all passion, I might say all feeling; and if, in dealing with such a being, we ourselves have either, we give him an advantage.'

'Well, all the same, I hope you will win the golden helm to-morrow,' said Endymion, looking a little perplexed.

'The golden casque that I am ordained to win,' said the prince, 'is not at Montfort Castle. This, after all, is but Mambrino's helmet.'

A knot of young dandies were discussing the chances of the morrow as Endymion was passing by, and as he knew most of them he joined the group.

'I hope to heaven,' said one, 'that the Count of Ferroll will beat that foreign chap to-morrow; I hate foreigners.'

'So do I,' said a second, and there was a general murmur of assent.

'The Count of Ferroll is as much a foreigner as the prince,' said Endymion rather sharply.

'Oh! I don't call him a foreigner at all,' said the first speaker. 'He is a great favourite at White's; no one rides cross country like him, and he is a deuced fine shot in the bargain.'

'I will back Prince Florestan against him either in field or cover,' said Endymion.

'Well, I don't know your friend,' said the young gentleman contemptuously, 'so I cannot bet.'

'I am sure your friend, Lady Montfort, my dear Dymy, will back the Count of Ferroll,' lisped a third young gentleman.

This completed the programme of mortification, and Endymion, hot and then cold, and then both at the same time, bereft of repartee, and wishing the earth would open and Montfort Castle disappear in its convulsed bosom, stole silently away as soon as practicable, and wandered as far as possible from the music and the bursts of revelry.

These conversations had taken place in the chief saloon, which was contiguous to the ball-room, and which was nearly as full of guests. Endymion, moving in the opposite direction, entered another drawing-room, where the population was sparse. It consisted of couples apparently deeply interested in each other. Some faces were radiant, and some pensive and a little agitated, but they all agreed in one expression, that they took no interest whatever in the solitary Endymion. Even their whispered words were hushed as he passed by, and they seemed, with their

stony, unsympathising glance, to look upon him as upon some inferior being who had intruded into their paradise. In short, Endymion felt all that embarrassment, mingled with a certain portion of self-contempt, which attends the conviction that we are what is delicately called *de trop*.

He advanced and took refuge in another room, where there was only a single, and still more engrossed pair; but this was even more intolerable to him. Shrinking from a return to the hostile chamber he had just left, he made a frantic rush forward with affected ease and alacrity, and found himself alone in the favourite morning room of Lady Montfort.

He threw himself on a sofa, and hid his face in his hand, and gave a sigh, which was almost a groan. He was sick at heart; his extremities were cold, his brain was feeble. All hope, and truly all thought of the future, deserted him. He remembered only the sorrowful, or the humiliating, chapters in his life. He wished he had never left Hurstley. He wished he had been apprenticed to Farmer Thornberry, that he had never quitted his desk at Somerset House, and never known more of life than Joe's and the divan. All was vanity and vexation of spirit. He contemplated finishing his days in the neighbouring stream, in which, but a few days ago, he was bathing in health and joy.

Time flew on; he was unconscious of its course; no one entered the room, and he wished never to see a human face again, when a voice sounded, and he heard his name.

'Endymion!'

He looked up; it was Lady Montfort. He did not speak, but gave her, perhaps unconsciously, a glance of reproach and despair.

'What is the matter with you?' she said.

'Nothing.'

'That is nonsense. Something must have happened. I have missed you so long, but was determined to find you. Have you a headache?'

'No.'

'Come back; come back with me. It is so odd. My lord has asked for you twice.'

'I want to see no one.'

'Oh! but this is absurd—and on a day like this, when everything has been so successful, and every one is so happy.'

'I am not happy, and I am not successful.'

'You perfectly astonish me,' said Lady Montfort; 'I shall begin to believe that you have not so sweet a temper as I always supposed.'

'It matters not what my temper is.'

'I think it matters a great deal. I like, above all things, to live with good-tempered people.'

'I hope you may not be disappointed. My temper is my own affair, and I am content always to be alone.'

'Why! you are talking nonsense, Endymion.'

'Probably; I do not pretend to be gifted. I am not one of those gentlemen who cannot fail. I am not the man of the future.'

'Well! I never was so surprised in my life,' exclaimed Lady Montfort. 'I never will pretend to form an opinion of human character again. Now, my dear Endymion, rouse yourself, and came back with me. Give me your arm. I cannot stay another moment; I dare say I have already been wanted a thousand times.'

'I cannot go back,' said Endymion; 'I never wish to see anybody again. If you want an arm, there is the Count of Ferroll, and I hope you may find he has a sweeter temper than I have.'

Lady Montfort looked at him with a strange and startled glance. It was a mixture of surprise, a little disdain, some affection blended with mockery. And then exclaiming 'Silly boy!' she swept out of the room.

CHAPTER LXI.

'I DO not like the prospect of affairs,' said Mr. Sidney Wilton to Endymion as they were posting up to London from Montfort Castle; a long journey, but softened in those days by many luxuries, and they had much to talk about.

'The decline of the revenue is not fitful; it is regular. Our people are too apt to look at the state of the revenue merely in a financial point of view. If a surplus, take off taxes; if a deficiency, put them on. But the state of the revenue should also be considered as the index of the condition of the population. According to my impression, the condition of the people is declining; and why? because they are less employed. If this spreads, they will become discontented and disaffected, and I cannot help remembering that, if they become troublesome, it is our office that will have to deal with them.'

'This bad harvest is a great misfortune,' said Endymion.

'Yes, but a bad harvest, though unquestionably a great, perhaps the greatest, misfortune for this country, is not the entire solution of our difficulties—I would say, our coming difficulties. A bad harvest touches the whole of our commercial system: it brings us face to face with the corn laws. I wish our chief would give his mind to that subject. I believe a moderate fixed duty of about twelve shillings a quarter would satisfy every one, and nothing then could shake this country.'

Endymion listened with interest to other views of his master, who descanted on them at much length. Private secretaries know everything about their chiefs, and Endymion was not ignorant that among many of the great houses of the Whig party, and indeed among the bulk of what was called 'the Liberal' party generally, Mr. Sidney Wilton was looked upon, so far as economical questions were concerned, as very crotchety, indeed a dangerous character. Lord Montfort was the only magnate who was entirely opposed to the corn laws, but then, as Berengaria would remark, 'Simon is against all laws; he is not a practical man.'

Mr. Sidney Wilton reverted to these views more than once in the course of their journey, 'I was not alarmed about the Chartists last year. Political trouble in this country never frightens me. Insurrections and riots strengthen an English government; they gave a new lease even to Lord Liverpool when his ministry was most feeble and unpopular; but economical discontent is quite another thing. The moment sedition arises from taxation, or want of employment, it is more

dangerous and more difficult to deal with in this country than any other.'

'Lord Roehampton seemed to take rather a sanguine view of the situation after the Bed-Chamber business in the spring,' observed Endymion, rather in an inquiring than a dogmatic spirit.

'Lord Roehampton has other things to think of,' said Mr. Wilton. 'He is absorbed, and naturally absorbed, in his department, the most important in the state, and of which he is master. But I am obliged to look at affairs nearer home. Now, this Anti-Corn-Law League, which they established last year at Manchester, and which begins to be very busy, though nobody at present talks of it, is, in my mind, a movement which ought to be watched. I tell you what; it occurred to me more than once during that wondrous pageant, that we have just now been taking part in, the government wants better information than they have as to the state of the country, the real feelings and condition of the bulk of the population. We used to sneer at the Tories for their ignorance of these matters, but after all, we, like them, are mainly dependent on quarter sessions; on the judgment of a lord-lieutenant and the statistics of a bench of magistrates. It is true we have introduced into our subordinate administration at Whitehall some persons who have obtained the reputation of distinguished economists, and we allow them to guide us. But though ingenious men, no doubt, they are chiefly bankrupt tradesmen, who, not having been able to manage their own affairs, have taken upon themselves to advise on the conduct of the country—pedants and prigs at the best, and sometimes impostors. No; this won't do. It is useless to speak to the chief; I did about the Anti-Corn-Law League; he shrugged his shoulders and said it was a madness that would pass. I have made up my mind to send somebody, quite privately, to the great scenes of national labour. He must be somebody whom nobody knows, and nobody suspects of being connected with the administration, or we shall never get the truth—and the person I have fixed upon is yourself.'

'But am I equal to such a task?' said Endymion modestly, but sincerely.

'I think so,' said Mr. Wilton, 'or, of course, I would not have fixed upon you. I want a fresh and virgin intelligence to observe and consider the country. It must be a mind free from prejudice, yet fairly informed on the great questions involved in the wealth of nations. I know you have read Adam Smith, and not lightly. Well, he is the best guide, though of course we must adapt his principles to the circumstances with which we have to deal. You have good judgment, great industry, a fairly quick perception, little passion—perhaps hardly enough; but that is probably the consequence of the sorrows and troubles of early life. But, after all, there is no education like adversity.'

'If it will only cease at the right time,' said Endymion.

'Well, in that respect, I do not think you have anything to complain of,' said Mr. Wilton. 'The world is all before you, and I mistake if you do not rise. Perseverance and tact are the two qualities most valuable for all men who would mount, but especially for those who have to step out of the crowd. I am sure no one can say you are not assiduous, but I am glad always to observe that you have tact. Without tact you can learn nothing. Tact teaches you when to be silent. Inquirers who are always inquiring never learn anything.'

CHAPTER LXII.

Lancashire was not so wonderful a place forty years ago as it is at present, but, compared then with the rest of England, it was infinitely more striking. For a youth like Endymion, born and bred in our southern counties, the Berkshire downs varied by the bustle of Pall-Mall and the Strand—Lancashire, with its teeming and toiling cities, its colossal manufactories and its gigantic chimneys, its roaring engines and its flaming furnaces, its tramroads and its railroads, its coal and its cotton, offered a far greater contrast to the scenes in which he had hitherto lived, than could be furnished by almost any country of the European continent.

Endymion felt it was rather a crisis in his life, and that his future might much depend on the fulfilment of the confidential office which had been entrusted to him by his chief. He summoned all his energies, concentrated his intelligence on the one subject, and devoted to its study and comprehension every moment of his thought and time. After a while, he had made Manchester his head-quarters. It was even then the centre of a network of railways, and gave him an easy command of the contiguous districts.

Endymion had more than once inquired after the Anti-Corn-Law League, but had not as yet been so fortunate as to attend any of their meetings. They were rarer then than they afterwards soon became, and the great manufacturers did not encourage them. 'I do not like extreme views,' said one of the most eminent one day to Endymion. 'In my opinion, we should always avoid extremes;' and he paused and looked around, as if he had enunciated a heaven-born truth, and for the first time. 'I am a Liberal; so we all are here. I supported Lord Grey, and I support Lord Melbourne, and I am, in everything, for a liberal policy. I don't like extremes. A wise minister should take off the duty on cotton wool. That is what the country really wants, and then everybody would be satisfied. No; I know nothing about this League you ask about, and I do not know any one—that is to say, any one respectable—who does. They came to me to lend my name. "No," I said, "gentlemen; I feel much honoured, but I do not like extremes;" and they went away. They are making a little more noise now, because they have got a man who has the gift of the gab, and the people like to go and hear him speak. But as I said to a friend of mine, who seemed half inclined to join them, "Well; if I did anything of that sort, I would be led by a Lancashire lad. They have got a foreigner to lead them, a fellow out of Berkshire; an agitator—and only a print-work after all. No; that will never do."'

Notwithstanding these views, which Endymion found very generally entertained by the new world in which he mixed, he resolved to take the earliest opportunity of attending the meeting of the League, and it soon arrived.

It was an evening meeting, so that workmen—or the operatives, as they were styled in this part of the kingdom—should be able to attend. The assembly took place in a large but temporary building; very well adapted to the human voice, and able to contain even thousands. It was fairly full to-night; and the platform, on which those who took a part in the proceedings, or who, by their comparatively influential presence, it was supposed, might assist the cause, was almost crowded.

'He is going to speak to-night,' said an operative to Endymion. 'That is why there is such an attendance.'

Remembering Mr. Wilton's hint about not asking unnecessary questions which often arrest information, Endymion did not inquire who 'he' was; and to promote communication merely observed, 'A fine speaker, then, I conclude?'

'Well, he is in a way,' said the operative. 'He has not got Hollaballoo's voice, but he knows what he is talking about. I doubt their getting what they are after; they have not the working classes with them. If they went against truck, it would be something.'

The chairman opened the proceedings; but was coldly received, though he spoke sensibly and at some length. He then introduced a gentleman, who was absolutely an alderman, to move a resolution condemnatory of the corn laws. The august position of the speaker atoned for his halting rhetoric, and a city which had only just for the first time been invested with municipal privileges was hushed before a man who might in time even become a mayor.

Then the seconder advanced, and there was a general burst of applause.

'There he is,' said the operative to Endymion; 'you see they like him. Oh, Job knows how to do it!'

Endymion listened with interest, soon with delight, soon with a feeling of exciting and not unpleasing perplexity, to the orator; for he was an orator, though then unrecognised, and known only in his district. He was a pale and slender man, with a fine brow and an eye that occasionally flashed with the fire of a creative mind. His voice certainly was not like Hollaballoo's. It was rather thin, but singularly clear. There was nothing

clearer except his meaning. Endymion never heard a case stated with such pellucid art; facts marshalled with such vivid simplicity, and inferences so natural and spontaneous and irresistible, that they seemed, as it were, borrowed from his audience, though none of that audience had arrived at them before. The meeting was hushed, was rapt in intellectual delight, for they did not give the speaker the enthusiasm of their sympathy. That was not shared, perhaps, by the moiety of those who listened to him. When his case was fairly before them, the speaker dealt with his opponents—some in the press, some in parliament—with much power of sarcasm, but this power was evidently rather repressed than allowed to run riot. What impressed Endymion as the chief quality of this remarkable speaker was his persuasiveness, and he had the air of being too prudent to offend even an opponent unnecessarily. His language, though natural and easy, was choice and refined. He was evidently a man who had read, and not a little; and there was no taint of vulgarity, scarcely a provincialism, in his pronunciation.

He spoke for rather more than an hour; and frequently during this time, Endymion, notwithstanding his keen interest in what was taking place, was troubled, it might be disturbed, by pictures and memories of the past that he endeavoured in vain to drive away. When the orator concluded, amid cheering much louder than that which had first greeted him, Endymion, in a rather agitated voice, whispered to his neighbour, 'Tell me—is his name Thornberry?'

'That is your time of day,' said the operative. 'Job Thornberry is his name, and I am on his works.'

'And yet you do not agree with him?'

'Well; I go as far as he goes, but he does not go so far as I go; that's it.'

'I do not see how a man can go much farther,' said Endymion. 'Where are his works? I knew your master when he was in the south of England, and I should like to call on him.'

'My employer,' said the operative. 'They call themselves masters, but we do not. I will tell you. His works are a mile out of town; but it seems only a step, for there are houses

all the way. Job Thornberry & Co.'s Print-works, Pendleton Road—any one can guide you—and when you get there, you can ask for me, if you like. I am his overlooker, and my name is ENOCH CRAGGS.'

CHAPTER LXIII.

'YOU are not much altered,' said Thornberry, as he retained Endymion's hand, and he looked at him earnestly; 'and yet you have become a man. I suppose I am ten years your senior. I have never been back to the old place, and yet I sometimes think I should like to be buried there. The old man has been here, and more than once, and liked it well enough; at least, I hope so. He told me a good deal about you all; some sorrows, and, I hope, some joys. I heard of Miss Myra's marriage; she was a sweet young lady; the gravest person I ever knew; I never knew her smile. I remember they thought her proud, but I always had a fancy for her. Well; she has married a topsawyer—I believe the ablest of them all, and probably the most unprincipled; though I ought not to say that to you. However, public men are spoken freely of. I wish to Heaven you would get him to leave off tinkering those commercial treaties that he is always making such a fuss about. More pernicious nonsense was never devised by man than treaties of commerce. However, their precious most favoured nation clause will break down the whole concern yet. But you wish to see the works; I will show them to you myself. There is not much going on now, and the stagnation increases daily. And then, if you are willing, we will go home and have a bit of lunch—I live hard by. My best works are my wife and children: I have made that joke before, as you can well fancy.'

This was the greeting, sincere but not unkind, of Job Thornberry to Endymion on the day after the meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League. To Endymion it was an interesting, and, as he believed it would prove, a useful encounter.

The print-works were among the most considerable of their

kind at Manchester, but they were working now with reduced numbers and at half-time. It was the energy and the taste and invention of Thornberry that had given them their reputation, and secured them extensive markets. He had worked with borrowed capital, but had paid off his debt, and his establishment was now his own; but, stimulated by his success, he had made a consignment of large amount to the United States, where it arrived only to be welcomed by what was called the American crash.

Turning from the high road, a walk of half a mile brought them to a little world of villas; varying in style and size, but all pretty, and each in its garden. 'And this is my home,' said Thornberry, opening the wicket, 'and here is my mistress and the young folks'—pointing to a pretty woman, but with an expression of no inconsiderable self-confidence, and with several children clinging to her dress and hiding their faces at the unexpected sight of a stranger. 'My eldest is a boy, but he is at school,' said Thornberry. 'I have named him, after one of the greatest men that ever lived, John Hampden.'

'He was a landed proprietor,' observed Endymion rather drily; 'and a considerable one.'

'I have brought an old friend to take cheer with us,' continued Thornberry; 'one whom I knew before any here present; so show your faces, little people;' and he caught up one of the children, a fair child like its mother, long-haired and blushing like a Worcestershire orchard before harvest time. 'Tell the gentleman what you are.'

'A free-trader,' murmured the infant.

Within the house were several shelves of books well selected, and the walls were adorned with capital prints of famous works of art. 'They are chiefly what are called books of reference,' said Thornberry, as Endymion was noticing his volumes; 'but I have not much room, and, to tell you the truth, they are not merely books of reference to me—I like reading encyclopædias. The "Dictionary of Dates" is a favourite book of mine. The mind sometimes wants tone, and then I read Milton. He is the only poet I read—he is complete, and is enough. I have got his prose works too. Milton was the greatest of Englishmen.'

The repast was simple, but plenteous, and nothing could be neater than the manner in which it was served.

'We are teetotalers,' said Thornberry; 'but we can give you a good cup of coffee.'

'I am a teetotaler too at this time of the day,' said Endymion; 'but a good cup of coffee is, they say, the most delicious and the rarest beverage in the world.'

'Well,' continued Thornberry; 'it is a long time since we met, Mr. Ferrars—ten years. I used to think that in ten years one might do anything; and a year ago, I really thought I had done it; but the accursed laws of this blessed country, as it calls itself, have nearly broken me, as they have broken many a better man before me.'

'I am sorry to hear this,' said Endymion; 'I trust it is but a passing cloud.'

'It is not a cloud,' said Thornberry; 'it is a storm, a tempest, a wreck—but not only for me. Your great relative, my Lord Roehampton, must look to it, I can tell you that. What is happening in this country, and is about to happen, will not be cured or averted by commercial treaties—mark my words.'

'But what would cure it?' said Endymion.

'There is only one thing that can cure this country, and it will soon be too late for that. We must have free exchange.'

'Free exchange!' murmured Endymion thoughtfully.

'Why, look at this,' said Thornberry. 'I had been driving a capital trade with the States for nearly five years. I began with nothing, as you know. I had paid off all my borrowed capital; my works were my own, and this house is a freehold. A year ago I sent to my correspondent at New York the largest consignment of goods I had ever made and the best, and I cannot get the slightest return for them. My correspondent writes to me that there is no end of corn and bread-stuffs which he could send, if we could only receive them; but he knows very well he might as well try and send them to the moon. The people here are starving and want these bread-stuffs, and they are ready to pay for them by the products of their labour—and your blessed laws prevent them!'

'But these laws did not prevent your carrying on a thriving

trade with America for five years, according to your own account,' said Endymion. 'I do not question what you say; I am asking only for information.'

'What you say is fairly said, and it has been said before,' replied Thornberry; 'but there is nothing in it. We had a trade, and a thriving trade, with the States; though, to be sure, it was always fitful and ought to have been ten times as much, even during those five years. But the fact is, the state of affairs in America was then exceptional. They were embarked in great public works in which every one was investing his capital; shares and stocks abounded, and they paid us for our goods with them.'

'Then it would rather seem that they have no capital now to spare to purchase our goods?'

'Not so,' said Thornberry sharply, 'as I have shown; but were it so, it does not affect my principle. If there were free exchange, we should find employment and compensation in other countries, even if the States were logged, which I don't believe thirty millions of people with boundless territory ever can be.'

'But after all,' said Endymion, 'America is as little in favour of free exchange as we are. She may send us her bread-stuffs; but her laws will not admit our goods, except on the payment of enormous duties.'

'Pish!' said Thornberry; 'I do not care this for their enormous duties. Let me have free imports, and I will soon settle their duties.'

'To fight hostile tariffs with free imports,' said Endymion; 'is not that fighting against odds?'

'Not a bit. This country has nothing to do but to consider its imports. Foreigners will not give us their products for nothing; but as for their tariffs, if we were wise men, and looked to our real interests, their hostile tariffs, as you call them, would soon be falling down like an old wall.'

'Well, I confess,' said Endymion, 'I have for some time thought the principle of free exchange was a sound one; but its application in a country like this would be very difficult, and require, I should think, great prudence and moderation.'

'By prudence and moderation you mean ignorance and timidity,' said Thornberry scornfully.

'Not exactly that, I hope,' said Endymion; 'but you cannot deny that the home market is a most important element in the consideration of our public wealth, and it mainly rests upon the agriculture of the country.'

'Then it rests upon a very poor foundation,' said Thornberry. But if any persons should be more tempted than others by free exchange, it should be the great body of the consumers of this land, who pay unjust and excessive prices for every article they require. No, my dear Mr. Ferrars; the question is a very simple one, and we may talk for ever, and we shall never alter it. The laws of this country are made by the proprietors of land, and they make them for their own benefit. A man with a large estate is said to have a great stake in the country because some hundreds of people or so are more or less dependent on him. How has he a greater interest in the country than a manufacturer who has sunk £100,000 in machinery, and has a thousand people, as I had, receiving from him weekly wages? No home market, indeed! Pah! it is an affair of rent, and nothing more or less. And England is to be ruined to keep up rents. Are you going? Well, I am glad we have met. Perhaps we shall have another talk together some day. I shall not return to the works. There is little doing there, and I must think now of other things. The subscriptions to the League begin to come in apace. Say what they like in the House of Commons and the vile London press, the thing is stirring.'

Wishing to turn the conversation a little, Endymion asked Mrs. Thornberry whether she occasionally went to London.

'Never was there,' she said, in a sharp, clear voice; 'but I hope to go soon.'

'You will have a great deal to see.'

'All I want to see, and hear, is the Rev. Servetus Frost,' replied the lady. 'My idea of perfect happiness is to hear him every Sunday. He comes here sometimes, for his sister is settled here; a very big mill. He preached here a month ago. Should not I have liked the bishop to have heard him, that's all! But he would not dare to go; he could not answer a point.'

'My wife is of the Unitarian persuasion,' said Thornberry. 'I am not. I was born in our Church, and I keep to it; but I

often go to chapel with my wife. As for religion generally, if a man believes in his Maker and does his duty to his neighbour, in my mind that is sufficient.'

Endymion bade them good-bye, and strolled musingly towards his hotel.

Just as he reached the works again, he encountered Enoch Craggs, who was walking into Manchester.

'I am going to our institute,' said Enoch. 'I do not know why, but they have put me on the committee.'

'And, I doubt not, they did very wisely,' said Endymion.

'Master Thornberry was glad to see you?' said Enoch.

'And I was glad to see him.'

'He has got the gift of speech,' said Enoch.

'And that is a great gift.'

'If wisely exercised, and I will not say he is not exercising it wisely. Certainly for his own purpose, but whether that purpose is for the general good—query?'

'He is against monopoly,' observed Endymion inquiringly.

'Query again?' said Enoch.

'Well; he is opposed to the corn laws.'

'The corn laws are very bad laws,' said Enoch, 'and the sooner we get rid of them the better. But there are worse things than the corn laws.'

'Hem!' said Endymion.

'There are the money laws,' said Enoch.

'I did not know you cared so much about them at Manchester,' said Endymion. 'I thought it was Birmingham that was chiefly interested about currency.'

'I do not care one jot about currency,' said Enoch; 'and, so far as I can judge, the Birmingham chaps talk a deal of nonsense about the matter. Leastwise, they will never convince me that a slip of irredeemable paper is as good as the young queen's head on a twenty-shilling piece. I mean the laws that secure the accumulation of capital, by which means the real producers become mere hirelings, and really are little better than slaves.'

'But surely without capital we should all of us be little better than slaves?'

'I am not against capital,' replied Enoch. 'What I am against is capitalists.'

'But if we get rid of capitalists we shall soon get rid of capital.'

'No, no,' said Enoch, with his broad accent, shaking his head, and with a laughing eye. 'Master Thornberry has been telling you that. He is the most inveterate capitalist of the whole lot; and I always say, though they keep aloof from him at present, they will be all sticking to his skirts before long. Master Thornberry is against the capitalists in land; but there are other capitalists nearer home, and I know more about them. I was reading a book the other day about King Charles—Charles the First, whose head they cut off—I am very liking to that time, and read a good deal about it; and there was Lord Falkland, a great gentleman in those days, and he said, when Archbishop Laud was trying on some of his priestly tricks, that, "if he were to have a pope, he would rather the pope were at Rome than at Lambeth." So I sometimes think, if we are to be ruled by capitalists, I would sooner, perhaps, be ruled by gentlemen of estate, who have been long among us, than by persons who build big mills, who come from God knows where, and, when they have worked their millions out of our flesh and bone, go God knows where. But perhaps we shall get rid of them all some day—landlords and mill-lords.'

'And whom will you substitute for them?'

'The producers,' said Enoch, with a glance half savage, half triumphant.

'What can workmen do without capital?'

'Why, they make the capital,' said Enoch; 'and if they make the capital, is it not strange that they should not be able to contrive some means to keep the capital? Why, Job was saying the other day that there was nothing like a principle to work upon. It would carry all before it. So say I. And I have a principle too, though it is not Master Thornberry's. But it will carry all before it, though it may not be in my time. But I am not so sure of that.'

'And what is it?' asked Endymion.

'Co-operation.'

CHAPTER LXIV.

This strangely-revived acquaintance with Job Thornberry was not an unfruitful incident in the life of Endymion. Thornberry was a man of original mind and singular energy; and, although of extreme views on commercial subjects, all his conclusions were founded on extensive and various information, combined with no inconsiderable practice. The mind of Thornberry was essentially a missionary one. He was always ready to convert people; and he acted with ardour and interest on a youth who, both by his ability and his social position, was qualified to influence opinion. But this youth was gifted with a calm, wise judgment, of the extent and depth of which he was scarcely conscious himself; and Thornberry, like all propagandists, was more remarkable for his zeal and his convictions, than for that observation and perception of character which are the finest elements in the management of men and affairs.

'What you should do,' said Thornberry, one day, to Endymion, 'is to go to Scotland; go to the Glasgow district; that city itself, and Paisley, and Kilmarnock—keep your eye on Paisley. I am much mistaken if there will not soon be a state of things there which alone will break up the whole concern. It will burst it, sir; it will burst it.'

So Endymion, without saying anything, quietly went to Glasgow and its district, and noted enough to make him resolve soon to visit there again; but the cabinet reassembled in the early part of November, and he had to return to his duties.

In his leisure hours, Endymion devoted himself to the preparation of a report, for Mr. Sidney Wilton, on the condition and prospects of the manufacturing districts of the North of England, with some illustrative reference to that of the country beyond the Tweed. He concluded it before Christmas, and Mr. Wilton took it down with him to Gaydene, to study it at his leisure. Endymion passed his holidays with Lord and Lady Montfort, at their southern seat, Princedown.

Endymion spoke to Lady Montfort a little about his labours, for he had no secrets from her; but she did not much sympathise

with him, though she liked him to be sedulous and to distinguish himself. 'Only,' she observed, 'take care not to be *doctrinaire*, Endymion. I am always afraid of that with you. It is Sidney's fault; he always was *doctrinaire*. It was a great thing for you becoming his private secretary; to be the private secretary of a cabinet minister is a real step in life, and I shall always be most grateful to Sidney, whom I love for appointing you; but still, if I could have had my wish, you should have been Lord Roehampton's private secretary. That is real politics, and he is a real statesman. You must not let Mr. Wilton mislead you about the state of affairs in the cabinet. The cabinet consists of the prime minister and Lord Roehampton, and, if they are united, all the rest is vapour. And they will not consent to any nonsense about touching the corn laws; you may be sure of that. Besides, I will tell you a secret, which is not yet Pulchinello's secret, though I daresay it will be known when we all return to town—we shall have a great event when parliament meets; a royal marriage. What think you of that? The young queen is going to be married, and to a young prince, like a prince in a fairy tale. As Lord Roehampton wrote to me this morning, "Our royal marriage will be much more popular than the Anti-Corn-Law League."'

The royal marriage was very popular; but, unfortunately, it reflected no splendour on the ministry. The world blessed the queen and cheered the prince, but shook its head at the government. Sir Robert Peel also—whether from his own motive or the irresistible impulse of his party need not now be inquired into—sanctioned a direct attack on the government, in the shape of a vote of want of confidence in them, immediately the court festivities were over, and the attack was defeated by a narrow majority.

'Nothing could be more unprincipled,' said Berengaria, 'after he had refused to take office last year. As for our majority, it is, under such circumstances, twenty times more than we want. As Lord Roehampton says, one is enough.'

Trade and revenue continued to decline. There was again the prospect of a deficiency. The ministry, too, was kept in by the Irish vote, and the Irish then were very unpopular. The

cabinet itself generally was downcast, and among themselves occasionally murmured a regret that they had not retired when the opportunity offered in the preceding year. Berengaria, however, would not bate an inch of confidence and courage. 'You think too much,' she said to Endymion, 'of trade and finance. Trade always comes back, and finance never ruined a country, or an individual either if he had pluck. Mr. Sidney Wilton is a croaker. The things he fears will never happen; or, if they do, will turn out to be unimportant. Look to Lord Roehampton; he is the man. He does not care a rush whether the revenue increases or declines. He is thinking of real politics: foreign affairs; maintaining our power in Europe. Something will happen, before the session is over, in the Mediterranean;' and she pressed her finger to her lip, and then she added, 'The country will support Lord Roehampton, as they supported Pitt, and give him any amount of taxes that he likes.'

In the meantime, the social world had its incidents as well as the political, and not less interesting. Not one of the most insignificant, perhaps, was the introduction into society of the Countess of Beaumaris. Her husband, sacrificing even his hunting, had come up to town at the meeting of parliament, and received his friends in a noble mansion on Piccadilly Terrace. All its equipments were sumptuous and refined, and everything had been arranged under the personal supervision of Mr. Waldershare. They commenced very quietly; dinners little but constant, and graceful and finished as a banquet of Watteau. No formal invitations; men were brought in to dinner from the House of Lords 'just up,' or picked up, as it were carelessly, in the House of Commons by Mr. Waldershare, or were asked by Imogene, at a dozen hours' notice, in billets of irresistible simplicity. Soon it was whispered about, that the thing to do was to dine with Beaumaris, and that Lady Beaumaris was 'something too delightful.' Prince Florestan frequently dined there; Waldershare always there, in a state of coruscation; and every man of fashion in the opposite ranks, especially if they had brains.

Then, in a little time, it was gently hoped that Imogene should call on their wives and mothers, or their wives and mothers call on her; and then she received, without any formal

invitation, twice a week; and as there was nothing going on in London, or nothing half so charming, everybody who was anybody came to Piccadilly Terrace; and so as, after long observation, a new planet is occasionally discovered by a philosopher, thus society suddenly and indubitably discovered that there was at last a Tory house.

Lady Rochampton, duly apprised of affairs by her brother, had called on Lord and Lady Beaumaris, and had invited them to her house. It was the first appearance of Imogene in general society, and it was successful. Her large brown eyes, and long black lashes, her pretty mouth and dimple, her wondrous hair —which, it was whispered, unfolded, touched the ground— struck every one, and the dignified simplicity of her carriage was attractive. Her husband never left her side; while Mr. Waldershare was in every part of the saloons, watching her from distant points, to see how she got on, or catching the remarks of others on her appearance. Myra was kind to her as well as courteous, and, when the stream of arriving guests had somewhat ceased, sought her out and spoke to her; and then put her arm in hers, walked with her for a moment, and introduced her to one or two great personages, who had previously intimated their wish or their consent to that effect. Lady Montfort was not one of these. When parties are equal, and the struggle for power is intense, society loses much of its sympathy and softness. Lady Montfort could endure the presence of Tories, provided they were her kinsfolk, and would join, even at their houses, in traditionary festivities; but she shrank from passing the line, and at once had a prejudice against Imogene, who she instinctively felt might become a power for the enemy.

'I will not have you talk so much to that Lady Beaumaris,' she said to Endymion.

'She is an old friend of mine,' he replied.

'How could you have known her? She was a shop-girl, was not she, or something of that sort?'

'She and her family were very kind to me when I was not much better than a shop-boy myself,' replied Endymion, with a mantling cheek. 'They are most respectable people, and I have a great regard for her.'

'Indeed! Well; I will not keep you from your Tory woman, said Berengaria rudely; and she walked away.

Altogether, this season of '40 was not a very satisfactory one in any respect, as regarded society or the country in general. Party passion was at its highest. The ministry retained office almost by a casting vote; were frequently defeated on important questions; and whenever a vacancy occurred, it was filled by their opponents. Their unpopularity increased daily, and it was stimulated by the general distress. All that Job Thornberry had predicted as to the state of manufacturing Scotland duly occurred. Besides manufacturing distress, they had to encounter a series of bad harvests. Never was a body of statesmen placed in a more embarrassing and less enviable position. There was a prevalent, though unfounded, conviction that they were maintained in power by a combination of court favour with Irish sedition.

Lady Montfort and Lord Roehampton were the only persons who never lost heart. She was defiant; and he ever smiled, at least in public. 'What nonsense!' she would say. 'Mr. Sidney Wilton talks about the revenue falling off! As if the revenue could ever really fall off! And then our bad harvests. Why, that is the very reason we shall have an excellent harvest this year. You cannot go on always having bad harvests. Besides, good harvests never make a ministry popular. Nobody thanks a ministry for a good harvest. What makes a ministry popular is some great *coup* in foreign affairs.'

Amid all these exciting disquietudes, Endymion pursued a life of enjoyment, but also of observation and much labour. He lived more and more with the Montforts, but the friendship of Berengaria was not frivolous. Though she liked him to be seen where he ought to figure, and required a great deal of attention herself, she ever impressed on him that his present life was only a training for a future career, and that his mind should ever be fixed on the attainment of a high position. Particularly she impressed on him the importance of being a linguist. 'There will be a reaction some day from all this political economy,' she would say, 'and then there will be no one ready to take the helm.' Endymion was not unworthy of

the inspiring interest which Lady Montfort took in him. The terrible vicissitudes of his early years had gravely impressed his character. Though ambitious, he was prudent; and, though born to please and be pleased, he was sedulous and self-restrained. Though naturally deeply interested in the fortunes of his political friends, and especially of Lord Roehampton and Mr. Wilton, a careful scrutiny of existing circumstances had prepared him for an inevitable change; and, remembering what was their position but a few years back, he felt that his sister and himself should be reconciled to their altered lot, and be content. She would still be a peeress, and the happy wife of an illustrious man; and he himself, though he would have to relapse into the drudgery of a public office, would meet duties the discharge of which was once the object of his ambition, coupled now with an adequate income and with many friends.

And among those friends, there were none with whom he maintained his relations more intimately than with the Neuchatels. He was often their guest both in town and at Hainault, and he met them frequently in society, always at the receptions of Lady Montfort and his sister. Zenobia used sometimes to send him a card; but these condescending recognitions of late had ceased, particularly as the great dame heard he was 'always at that Lady Beaumaris's.' One of the social incidents of his circle, not the least interesting to him, was the close attendance of Adriana and her mother on the ministrations of Nigel Penruddock. They had become among the most devoted of his flock; and this, too, when the rapid and startling development of his sacred offices had so alarmed the easy, though sagacious, Lord Roehampton, that he had absolutely expressed his wish to Myra that she should rarely attend them, and, indeed, gradually altogether drop a habit which might ultimately compromise her. Berengaria had long ago quitted him. This was attributed to her reputed caprice, yet it was not so. 'I like a man to be practical,' she said. 'When I asked for a deanery for him the other day, the prime minister said he could hardly make a man a dean who believed in the Real Presence.' Nigel's church,

however, was more crowded than ever, and a large body of the clergy began to look upon him as the coming man.

Towards the end of the year the 'great *coup* in foreign affairs,' which Lady Montfort had long brooded over, and indeed foreseen, occurred, and took the world, who were all thinking of something else, entirely by surprise. A tripartite alliance of great powers had suddenly started into life; the Egyptian host was swept from the conquered plains of Asia Minor and Syria by English blue-jackets; St. Jean d'Acre, which had baffled the great Napoleon, was bombarded and taken by a British fleet; and the whole fortunes of the world in a moment seemed changed, and permanently changed.

'I am glad it did not occur in the season,' said Zenobia. 'I really could not stand Lady Montfort if it were May.'

The ministry was elate, and their Christmas was right merrie. There seemed good cause for this. It was a triumph of diplomatic skill, national valour, and administrative energy. Myra was prouder of her husband than ever, and, amid all the excitement, he smiled on her with sunny fondness. Everybody congratulated her. She gave a little reception before the holidays, to which everybody came who was in town or passing through. Even Zenobia appeared; but she stayed a very short time, talking very rapidly. Prince Florestan paid his grave devoirs, with a gaze which seemed always to search into Lady Roehampton's inmost heart, yet never lingering about her; and Waldershare, full of wondrous compliments and conceits, and really enthusiastic, for he ever sympathised with action; and Imogene, gorgeous with the Beaumaris sapphires; and Sidney Wilton, who kissed his hostess's hand, and Adriana, who kissed her cheek.

'I tell you what, Mr. Endymion,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'you should make Lord Roehampton your Chancellor of the Exchequer, and then your government might perhaps go on a little.'

CHAPTER LXV.

But, as Mr. Tadpole observed, with much originality, at the Carlton, they were dancing on a volcano. It was December, and the harvest was not yet all got in, the spring corn had never grown, and the wheat was rusty; there was, he well knew, another deficiency in the revenue, to be counted by millions; wise men shook their heads and said the trade was leaving the country, and it was rumoured that the whole population of Paisley lived on the rates.

'Lord Roehampton thinks that something must be done about the corn laws,' murmured Berengaria one day to Endymion, rather crestfallen; 'but they will try sugar and timber first. I think it all nonsense, but nonsense is sometimes necessary.'

This was the first warning of that famous budget of 1841 which led to such vast consequences, and which, directly or indirectly, gave such a new form and colour to English politics. Sidney Wilton and his friends were at length all-powerful in the cabinet, because, in reality, there was nobody to oppose them. The vessel was waterlogged. The premier shrugged his shoulders; and Lord Roehampton said, 'We may as well try it, because the alternative is, we shall have to resign.'

Affairs went on badly for the ministry during the early part of the session. They were more than once in a minority, and on Irish questions, which then deeply interested the country; but they had resolved that their fate should be decided by their financial measures, and Mr. Sidney Wilton and his friends were still sanguine as to the result. On the last day of April the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced the budget, and proposed to provide for the deficiency by reducing the protective duties on sugar and timber. A few days after, the leader of the House of Commons himself announced a change in the corn laws, and the intended introduction of grain at various-priced duties per quarter.

Then commenced the struggle of a month. Ultimately, Sir Robert Peel himself gave notice of a resolution of want of con-

fidence in the ministry; and after a week's debate it was carried, in an almost complete house, by a majority of one!

It was generally supposed that the ministry would immediately resign. Their new measures had not revived their popularity, and the parliament in which they had been condemned had been elected under their own advice and influence. Mr. Sidney Wilton had even told Endymion to get their papers in order; and all around the somewhat dejected private secretary there were unmistakable signs of that fatal flitting which is peculiarly sickening to the youthful politician.

He was breakfasting in his rooms at the Albany with not a good appetite. Although he had for some time contemplated the possibility of such changes—and contemplated them, as he thought, with philosophy—when it came to reality and practice, he found his spirit was by no means so calm, or his courage so firm, as he had counted on. The charms of office arrayed themselves before him. The social influence, the secret information, the danger, the dexterity, the ceaseless excitement, the delights of patronage which everybody affects to disregard, the power of benefiting others, and often the worthy and unknown which is a real joy—in eight-and-forty hours or so, all these, to which he had now been used for some time, and which with his plastic disposition had become a second nature, were to vanish, and probably never return. Why should they? He took the gloomiest view of the future, and his inward soul acknowledged that the man the country wanted was Peel. Why might he not govern as long as Pitt? He probably would. Peel! his father's friend! And this led to a train of painful but arbsorbing memories, and he sat musing and abstracted, fiddling with an idle egg-spoon.

His servant came in with a note, which he eagerly opened. It ran thus: 'I must see you instantly. I am here in the brougham, Cork Street end. Come directly. B. M.'

Endymion had to walk up half the Albany, and marked the brougham the whole way. There was in it an eager and radiant face.

'You had better get in,' said Lady Montfort, 'for in these stirring times some of the enemy may be passing. And now,'

she continued, when the door was fairly shut, 'nobody knows it, not five people. They are going to dissolve.'

'To dissolve!' exclaimed Endymion. 'Will that help us?'

'Very likely,' said Berengaria. 'We have had our share of bad luck, and now we may throw in. Cheap bread is a fine cry. Indeed it is too shocking that there should be laws which add to the price of what everybody agrees is the staff of life. But you do nothing but stare, Endymion: I thought you would be in a state of the greatest excitement!'

'I am rather stunned than excited.'

'Well, but you must not be stunned, you must act. This is a crisis for our party, but it is something more for you. It is your climacteric. They may lose; but you must win, if you will only bestir yourself. See the whips directly, and get the most certain seat you can. Nothing must prevent your being in the new parliament.'

'I see everything to prevent it,' said Endymion. 'I have no means of getting into parliament—no means of any kind.'

'Means must be found,' said Lady Montfort. 'We cannot stop now to talk about means. That would be a mere waste of time. The thing must be done. I am now going to your sister, to consult with her. All you have got to do is to make up your mind that you will be in the next parliament, and you will succeed; for everything in this world depends upon will.'

'I think everything in this world depends upon woman,' said Endymion.

'It is the same thing,' said Berengaria.

Adriana was with Lady Roehampton when Lady Montfort was announced.

Adriana came to console; but she herself was not without solace, for, if there were a change of government, she would see more of her friend.

'Well; I was prepared for it,' said Lady Roehampton. 'I have always been expecting something ever since what they called the Bed-Chamber Plot.'

'Well; it gave us two years,' said Lady Montfort; 'and we are not out yet.'

Here were three women, young, beautiful, and powerful, and

all friends of Endymion—real friends. Property does not consist merely of parks and palaces, broad acres, funds in many forms, services of plate, and collections of pictures. The affections of the heart are property, and the sympathy of the right person is often worth a good estate.

These three charming women were cordial, and embraced each other when they met; but the conversation flagged, and the penetrating eye of Myra read in the countenance of Lady Montfort the urgent need of confidence.

'So, dearest Adriana,' said Lady Roehampton, 'we will drive out together at three o'clock. I will call on you.' And Adriana disappeared.

'You know it?' said Lady Montfort, when they were alone. 'Of course you know it. Besides, I know you know it. What I have come about is this: your brother must be in the new parliament.'

'I have not seen him; I have not mentioned it to him,' said Myra, somewhat hesitatingly.

'I have seen him; I have mentioned it to him,' said Lady Montfort decidedly. 'He makes difficulties; there must be none. He will consult you. I came on at once that you might be prepared. No difficulty must be admitted. His future depends on it.'

'I live for his future,' said Lady Roehampton.

'He will talk to you about money. These things always cost money. As a general rule, nobody has money who ought to have it. I know dear Lord Roehampton is very kind to you; but, all his life, he never had too much money at his command; though why, I never could make out. And my lord has always had too much money; but I do not much care to talk to him about these affairs. The thing must be done. What is the use of diamond necklaces if you cannot help a friend into parliament? But all I want now is that you will throw no difficulties in his way. Help him, too, if you can.'

'I wish Endymion had married,' replied Myra.

'Well; I do not see how that would help affairs,' said Lady Montfort. 'Besides, I dislike married men. They are very uninteresting.'

'I mean, I wish,' said Lady Roehampton musingly, 'that he had made a great match.'

'That is not very easy,' said Lady Montfort, 'and great matches are generally failures. All the married heiresses I have known have shipwrecked.'

'And yet it is possible to marry an heiress and love her,' said Myra.

'It is possible, but very improbable.'

'I think one might easily love the person who has just left the room.'

'Miss Neuchatel?'

'Adriana. Do not you agree with me?'

'Miss Neuchatel will never marry,' said Lady Montfort, 'unless she loses her fortune.'

'Well; do you know, I have sometimes thought that she liked Endymion? I never could encourage such a feeling; and Endymion, I am sure, would not. I wish, I almost wish,' added Lady Roehampton, trying to speak with playfulness, 'that you would use your magic influence, dear Lady Montfort, and bring it about. He would soon get into parliament then.'

'I have tried to marry Miss Neuchatel once,' said Lady Montfort, with a mantling cheek, 'and I am glad to say I did not succeed. My match-making is over.'

There was a dead silence; one of those still moments which almost seem inconsistent with life, certainly with the presence of more than one human being. Lady Roehampton seemed buried in deep thought. She was quite abstracted, her eyes fixed, and fixed upon the ground. All the history of her life passed through her brain—all the history of their lives; from the nursery to this proud moment, proud even with all its searching anxiety. And yet the period of silence could be counted almost by seconds. Suddenly she looked up with a flushed cheek and a dazed look, and said, 'It must be done.'

Lady Montfort sprang forward with a glance radiant with hope and energy, and kissed her on both cheeks. 'Dearest Lady Roehampton,' she exclaimed, 'dearest Myra! I knew you would agree with me. Yes! it must be done.'

'You will see him perhaps before I do?' inquired Myra rather hesitatingly.

'I see him every day at the same time,' replied Lady Montfort. 'He generally walks down to the House of Commons with Mr. Wilton, and when they have answered questions, and he has got all the news of the lobby, he comes to me. I always manage to get home from my drive to give him half an hour before dinner.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Lady Montfort drove off to the private residence of the Secretary of the Treasury, who was of course in the great secret. She looked over his lists, examined his books, and seemed to have as much acquaintance with electioneering details as that wily and experienced gentleman himself. 'Is there anything I can do?' she repeatedly inquired; 'command me without compunction. Is it any use giving any parties? Can I write any letters? Can I see anybody?'

'If you could stir up my lord a little?' said the secretary inquiringly.

'Well, that is difficult,' said Lady Montfort, 'perhaps impossible. But you have all his influence, and when there is a point that presses you must let me know.'

'If he would only speak to his agents?' said the secretary, 'but they say he will not, and he has a terrible fellow in ——shire, who I hear is one of the stewards for a dinner to Sir Robert.'

'I have stopped all that,' said Lady Montfort. 'That was Odo's doing, who is himself not very sound; full of prejudices about O'Connell, and all that stuff. But he must go with his party. You need not fear about him.'

'Well! it is a leap in the dark,' said the secretary.

'Oh! no,' said Lady Montfort, 'all will go right. A starving people must be in favour of a government who will give them bread for nothing. By the by, there is one thing, my dear

Mr. Secretary, you must remember. I must have one seat, a certain seat, reserved for my nomination.'

'A certain seat in these days is a rare gem,' said the secretary.

'Yes, but I must have it nevertheless,' said Lady Montfort. 'I don't care about the cost or the trouble—but it must be certain.'

Then she went home and wrote a line to Endymion, to tell him that it was all settled, that she had seen his sister, who agreed with her that it must be done, and that she had called on the Secretary of the Treasury, and had secured a certain seat. 'I wish you could come to luncheon,' she added, 'but I suppose that is impossible; you are always so busy. Why were you not in the Foreign Office? I am now going to call on the Tory women to see how they look, but I shall be at home a good while before seven, and of course count on seeing you.'

In the meantime, Endymion by no means shared the pleasurable excitement of his fair friend. His was an agitated walk from the Albany to Whitehall, where he resumed his duties moody and disquieted. There was a large correspondence this morning, which was a distraction and a relief, until the bell of Mr. Sidney Wilton sounded, and he was in attendance on his chief.

'It is a great secret,' said Mr. Wilton, 'but I think I ought to tell you; instead of resigning, the government have decided to dissolve. I think it a mistake, but I stand by my friends. They believe the Irish vote will be very large, and with cheap bread will carry us through. I think the stronger we shall be in Ireland the weaker we shall be in England, and I doubt whether our cheap bread will be cheap enough. These Manchester associations have altered the aspect of affairs. I have been thinking a good deal about your position. I should like, before we broke up, to have seen you provided for by some permanent office of importance in which you might have been useful to the state, but it is difficult to manage these things suddenly. However, now we have time at any rate to look about us. Still, if I could have seen you permanently attached to this office in a responsible position, I should have been glad. I impressed upon the chief yesterday that you are most fit for it.'

'Oh! do not think of me, dear sir; you have been always

too kind to me. I shall be content with my lot. All I shall regret is ceasing to serve you.'

Lady Montfort's carriage drove up to Montfort House just as Endymion reached the door. She took his arm with eagerness; she seemed breathless with excitement. 'I fear I am very late, but if you had gone away I should never have pardoned you. I have been kept by listening to all the new appointments from Lady Bellasyse. They quite think we are out; you may be sure I did not deny it. I have so much to tell you. Come into my lord's room; he is away fishing. Think of fishing at such a crisis! I cannot tell you how pleased I was with my visit to Lady Roehampton. She quite agreed with me in everything. "It must be done," she said. How very right! and I have almost done it. I will have a certain seat; no chances. Let us have something to fall back upon. If not in office we shall be in opposition. All men must sometime or other be in opposition. There you will form yourself. It is a great thing to have had some official experience. It will save you from mares' nests, and I will give parties without end, and never rest till I see you prime minister.'

So she threw herself into her husband's easy chair, tossed her parasol on the table, and then she said, 'But what is the matter with you, Endymion? you look quite sad. You do not mean you really take our defeat—which is not certain yet—so much to heart. Believe me, opposition has its charms; indeed I sometimes think the principal reason why I have enjoyed our ministerial life so much is, that it has been from the first a perpetual struggle for existence.'

'I do not pretend to be quite indifferent to the probably impending change,' said Endymion, 'but I cannot say there is anything about it which would affect my feelings very deeply.'

'What is it, then?'

'It is this business about which you and Myra are so kindly interesting yourselves,' said Endymion, with some emotion; 'I do not think I could go into parliament.'

'Not go into parliament!' exclaimed Lady Montfort. 'Why, what are men made for except to go into parliament? I am indeed astounded.'

'I do not disparage parliament,' said Endymion; 'much the reverse. It is a life that I think would suit me, and I have often thought the day might come'——

'The day has come,' said Lady Montfort, 'and not a bit too soon. Mr. Fox went in before he was of age, and all young men of spirit should do the same. Why! you are two-and-twenty!'

'It is not my age,' said Endymion hesitatingly; 'I am not afraid about that, for from the life which I have led of late years, I know a good deal about the House of Commons.'

'Then what is it, dear Endymion?' said Lady Montfort impatiently.

'It will make a great change in my life,' said Endymion calmly, but with earnestness, 'and one which I do not feel justified in accepting.'

'I repeat to you, that you need give yourself no anxiety about the seat,' said Lady Montfort. 'It will not cost you a shilling. I and your sister have arranged all that. As she very wisely said, "It must be done," and it is done. All you have to do is to write an address, and make plenty of speeches, and you are M.P. for life, or as long as you like.'

'Possibly; a parliamentary adventurer, I might swim or I might sink; the chances are it would be the latter, for storms would arise, when those disappear who have no root in the country, and no fortune to secure them breathing time and a future.'

'Well, I did not expect, when you handed me out of my carriage to-day, that I was going to listen to a homily on prudence.'

'It is not very romantic, I own,' said Endymion, 'but my prudence is at any rate not a commonplace caught up from copy-books. I am only two-and-twenty, but I have had some experience, and it has been very bitter. I have spoken to you, dearest lady, sometimes of my earlier life, for I wished you to be acquainted with it, but I observed also you always seemed to shrink from such confidence, and I ceased from touching on what I saw did not interest you.'

'Quite a mistake. It greatly interested me. I know all about you and everything. I know you were not always a clerk

in a public office, but the spoiled child of splendour. I know your father was a dear good man, but he made a mistake, and followed the Duke of Wellington instead of Mr. Canning. Had he not, he would probably be alive now, and certainly Secretary of State, like Mr. Sidney Wilton. But *you* must not make a mistake, Endymion. My business in life, and your sister's too, is to prevent your making mistakes. And you are on the eve of making a very great one if you lose this golden opportunity. Do not think of the past; you dwell on it too much. Be like me, live in the present, and when you dream, dream of the future.'

'Ah! the present would be adequate, it would be fascination, if I always had such a companion as Lady Montfort,' said Endymion, shaking his head. 'What surprises me most, what indeed astounds me, is that Myra should join in this counsel—Myra, who knows all, and who has felt it perhaps deeper even than I did. But I will not obtrude these thoughts on you, best and dearest of friends. I ought not to have made to you the allusions to my private position which I have done, but it seemed to me the only way to explain my conduct, otherwise inexplicable.'

'And to whom ought you to say these things if not to me,' said Lady Montfort, 'whom you called just now your best and dearest friend? I wish to be such to you. Perhaps I have been too eager, but, at any rate, it was eagerness for your welfare. Let us then be calm. Speak to me as you would to Myra. I cannot be your twin, but I can be your sister in feeling.'

He took her hand and gently pressed it to his lips; his eyes would have been bedewed, had not the dreadful sorrows and trials of his life much checked his native susceptibility. Then speaking in a serious tone, he said, 'I am not without ambition, dearest Lady Montfort; I have had visions which would satisfy even you; but partly from my temperament, still more perhaps from the vicissitudes of my life, I have considerable waiting powers. I think if one is patient and watches, all will come of which one is capable; but no one can be patient who is not independent. My wants are moderate, but their fulfilment must be certain. The break-up of the government, which deprives me of my salary as a private secretary, deprives me of

luxuries which I can do without—a horse, a brougham, a stall at the play, a flower in my button-hole—but my clerkship is my freehold. As long as I possess it, I can study, I can work, I can watch and comprehend all the machinery of government. I can move in society, without which a public man, whatever his talents or acquirements, is in life playing at blind-man's-buff. I must sacrifice this citadel of my life if I go into parliament. Do not be offended, therefore, if I say to you, as I shall say to Myra, I have made up my mind not to surrender it. It is true I have the misfortune to be a year older than Charles Fox when he entered the senate, but even with this great disadvantage I am sometimes conceited enough to believe that I shall succeed, and to back myself against the field.'

CHAPTER LXVII.

Mr. Waldershare was delighted when the great secret was out, and he found that the ministry intended to dissolve, and not resign. It was on a Monday that Lord John Russell made this announcement, and Waldershare met Endymion in the lobby of the House of Commons. 'I congratulate you, my dear boy; your fellows, at least, have pluck. If they lose, which I think they will, they will have gained at least three months of power, and irresponsible power. Why! they may do anything in the interval, and no doubt will. You will see; they will make their chargers consuls. It beats the Bed-Chamber Plot, and I always admired that. One hundred days! Why, the Second Empire lasted only one hundred days. But what days! what excitement! They were worth a hundred years at Elba.'

'Your friends do not seem quite so pleased as you are,' said Endymion.

'My friends, as you call them, are old fogies, and want to divide the spoil among the ancient hands. It will be a great thing for Peel to get rid of some of these old friends. A dissolution permits the powerful to show their power. There is

Beaumaris, for example; now he will have an opportunity of letting them know who Lord Beaumaris is. I have a dream; he must be Master of the Horse. I shall never rest till I see Imogene riding in that golden coach, and breaking the line with all the honours of royalty.'

'Mr. Ferrars,' said the editor of a newspaper, seizing his watched-for opportunity as Waldershare and Endymion separated, 'do you think you could favour me this evening with Mr. Sidney Wilton's address? We have always supported Mr. Wilton's views on the corn laws, and if put clearly and powerfully before the country at this juncture, the effect might be great, perhaps even, if sustained, decisive.'

Eight-and-forty hours and more had elapsed since the conversation between Endymion and Lady Montfort; they had not been happy days. For the first time during their acquaintance there had been constraint and embarrassment between them. Lady Montfort no longer opposed his views, but she did not approve them. She avoided the subject; she looked uninterested in all that was going on around her; talked of joining her lord and going a-fishing; felt he was right in his views of life. 'Dear Simon was always right,' and then she sighed, and then she shrugged her very pretty shoulders. Endymion, though he called on her as usual, found there was nothing to converse about; politics seemed tacitly forbidden, and when he attempted small talk Lady Montfort seemed absent—and once absolutely yawned.

What amazed Endymion still more was, that, under these rather distressing circumstances, he did not find adequate support and sympathy in his sister. Lady Roehampton did not question the propriety of his decision, but she seemed quite as unhappy and as dissatisfied as Lady Montfort.

'What you say, dearest Endymion, is quite unanswerable, and I alone perhaps can really know that; but what I feel is, I have failed in life. My dream was to secure you greatness, and now, when the first occasion arrives, it seems I am more than powerless.'

'Dearest sister! you have done so much for me.'

'Nothing,' said Lady Roehampton; 'what I have done for

you would have been done by every sister in this metropolis. I dreamed of other things; I fancied, with my affection and my will, I could command events, and place you on a pinnacle. I see my folly now; others have controlled your life, not I—as was most natural; natural, but still bitter.'

'Dearest Myra!'

'It is so, Endymion. Let us deceive ourselves no longer. I ought not to have rested until you were in a position which would have made you master of your destiny.'

'But if there should be such a thing as destiny, it will not submit to the mastery of man.'

'Do not split words with me; you know what I mean; you feel what I mean; I mean much more than I say, and you understand much more than I say. My lord told me to ask you to dine with us, if you called, but I will not ask you. There is no joy in meeting at present. I feel as I felt in our last year at Hurstley.'

'Oh! don't say that, dear Myra!' and Endymion sprang forward and kissed her very much. 'Trust me; all will come right; a little patience, and all will come right.'

'I have had patience enough in life,' said Lady Roehampton; 'years of patience, the most doleful, the most dreary, the most dark and tragical. And I bore it all, and I bore it well, because I thought of you, and had confidence in you, and confidence in your star; and because, like an idiot, I had schooled myself to believe that, if I devoted my will to you, that star would triumph.'

So, the reader will see, that our hero was not in a very serene and genial mood when he was buttonholed by the editor in the lobby, and, it is feared, he was unusually curt with that gentleman, which editors do not like, and sometimes reward with a leading article in consequence, on the character and career of our political chief, perhaps with some passing reference to jacks-in-office, and the superficial impertinence of private secretaries. These wise and amiable speculators on public affairs should, however, sometimes charitably remember that even ministers have their chagrins, and that the trained temper and imperturb-

bable presence of mind of their aides-de-camp are not absolutely proof to all the infirmities of human nature.

Endymion had returned home from the lobby, depressed and dispirited. The last incident of our life shapes and colours our feelings. Ever since he had settled in London, his life might be said to have been happy, gradually and greatly prosperous. The devotion of his sister and the eminent position she had achieved, the friendship of Lady Montfort, and the kindness of society, who had received him with open arms, his easy circumstances after painful narrowness of means, his honourable and interesting position—these had been the chief among many other causes which had justly rendered Endymion Ferrars a satisfied and contented man. And it was more than to be hoped that not one of these sources would be wanting in his future. And yet he felt dejected, even to unhappiness. Myra figured to his painful consciousness only as deeply wounded in her feelings, and he somehow the cause; Lady Montfort, from whom he had never received anything but smiles and inspiring kindness, and witty raillery, and affectionate solicitude for his welfare, offended and estranged. And as for society, perhaps it would make a great difference in his position if he were no longer a private secretary to a cabinet minister and only a simple clerk; he could not, even at this melancholy moment, dwell on his impending loss of income, though that increase at the time had occasioned him, and those who loved him, so much satisfaction. And yet was he in fault? Had his decision been a narrow-minded and craven one? He could not bring himself to believe so—his conscience assured him that he had acted rightly. After all that he had experienced, he was prepared to welcome an obscure, but could not endure a humiliating position.

It was a long summer evening. The House had not sat after the announcement of the ministers. The twilight lingered with a charm almost as irresistible as among woods and waters. Endymion had been engaged to dine out, but had excused himself. Had it not been for the Montfort misunderstanding, he would have gone; but that haunted him. He had not called on her that day; he really had not courage to meet her. He

was beginning to think that he might never see her again; never, certainly, on the same terms. She had the reputation of being capricious, though she had been constant in her kindness to him. Never see her again, or only see her changed! He was not aware of the fulness of his misery before; he was not aware, until this moment, that unless he saw her every day life would be intolerable.

He sat down at his table, covered with notes in every female handwriting except the right one, and with cards of invitation to banquets and balls and concerts, and 'very earlies,' and carpet dances—for our friend was a very fashionable young man—but what is the use of even being fashionable, if the person you love cares for you no more? And so out of very wantonness, instead of opening notes sealed or stamped with every form of coronet, he took up a business-like epistle, closed only with a wafer, and saying in drollery, 'I should think a dun,' he took out a scrip receipt for £20,000 consols, purchased that morning in the name of Endymion Ferrars, Esq. It was enclosed in half a sheet of note-paper, on which were written these words, in a handwriting which gave no clue of acquaintanceship, or even sex: 'Mind—you are to send me your first frank.'

CHAPTER LXVIII.

It was useless to ask who could it be? It could only be one person; and yet how could it have been managed? So completely and so promptly! Her lord, too, away; the only being, it would seem, who could have effected for her such a purpose, and he the last individual to whom, perhaps, she would have applied. Was it a dream? The long twilight was dying away, and it dies away in the Albany a little sooner than it does in Park Lane; and so he lit the candles on his mantel-piece, and then again unfolded the document carefully, and read it and re-read it. It was not a dream. He held in his hand firmly, and read with his eyes clearly, the evidence that he was the uncontrolled master of no slight amount of capital, and which, if treated with prudence, secured to him for life an absolute

and becoming independence. His heart beat and his cheek glowed.

What a woman! And how true were Myra's last words at Hurstley, that women would be his best friends in life! He ceased to think; and, dropping into his chair, fell into a reverie, in which the past and the future seemed to blend, with some mingling of a vague and almost ecstatic present. It was a dream of fair women, and even fairer thoughts, domestic tenderness and romantic love, mixed up with strange vicissitudes of lofty and fiery action, and passionate passages of eloquence and power. The clock struck and roused him from his musing. He fell from the clouds. Could he accept this boon? Was his doing so consistent with that principle of independence on which he had resolved to build up his life? The boon thus conferred might be recalled and returned; not legally indeed, but by a stronger influence than any law—the consciousness on his part that the feeling of interest in his life which had prompted it might change—would, must change. It was the romantic impulse of a young and fascinating woman, who had been to him invariably kind, but who had a reputation for caprice, which was not unknown to him. It was a wild and beautiful adventure; but only that.

He walked up and down his rooms for a long time, sometimes thinking, sometimes merely musing; sometimes in a pleased but gently agitated state of almost unconsciousness. At last he sate down at his writing-table, and wrote for some time; and then directing the letter to the Countess of Montfort, he resolved to change the current of his thoughts, and went to a club.

Morning is not romantic. Romance is the twilight spell; but morn is bright and joyous, prompt with action, and full of sanguine hope. Life has few difficulties in the morning, at least, none which we cannot conquer; and a private secretary to a minister, young and prosperous, at his first meal, surrounded by dry toast, all the newspapers, and piles of correspondence, asking and promising everything, feels with pride and delight the sense of powerful and responsible existence. Endymion had glanced at all the leading articles, had sorted in the correspondence the grain from the chaff, and had settled in his mind those who must

be answered and those who must be seen. The strange incident of last night was of course not forgotten, but removed, as it were, from his consciousness in the bustle and pressure of active life, when his servant brought him a letter in a handwriting he knew right well. He would not open it till he was alone, and then it was with a beating heart and a burning cheek.

LADY MONTFORT'S LETTER.

'What is it all about? and what does it all mean? I should have thought some great calamity had occurred if, however distressing, it did not appear in some sense to be gratifying. What is gratifying? You deal in conundrums, which I never could find out. Of course I shall be at home to you at any time, if you wish to see me. Pray come on at once, as I detest mysteries. I went to the play last night with your sister. We both of us rather expected to see you, but it seems neither of us had mentioned to you we were going. I did not, for I was too low-spirited about your affairs. You lost nothing. The piece was stupid beyond expression. We laughed heartily, at least I did, to show we were not afraid. My lord came home last night suddenly. Odo is going to stand for the county, and his borough is vacant. What an opportunity it would have been for you! a certain seat. But I care for no boroughs now. My lord will want you to dine with him to-day; I hope you can come. Perhaps he will not be able to see you this morning, as his agent will be with him about these elections. Adieu!'

If Lady Montfort did not like conundrums, she had succeeded, however, in sending one sufficiently perplexing to Endymion. Could it be possible that the writer of this letter was the unknown benefactress of the preceding eve? Lady Montfort was not a mystifier. Her nature was singularly frank and fearless, and when Endymion told her everything that had occurred, and gave her the document which originally he had meant to bring with him in order to return it, her amazement and her joy were equal.

'I wish I had sent it,' said Lady Montfort, 'but that was impossible. I do not care who did send it; I have no female curio-

sity except about matters which, by knowledge, I may influence. This is finished. You are free. You cannot hesitate as to your course. I never could speak to you again if you did hesitate. Stop here, and I will go to my lord. This is a great day. If we can settle only to-day that you shall be the candidate for our borough, I really shall not much care for the change of ministry.'

Lady Montfort was a long time away. Endymion would have liked to have gone forth on his affairs, but she had impressed upon him so earnestly to wait for her return that he felt he could not retire. The room was one to which he was not unaccustomed, otherwise, its contents would not have been uninteresting; her portrait by more than one great master, a miniature of her husband in a Venetian dress upon her writing-table —a table which wonderfully indicated alike the lady of fashion and the lady of business, for there seemed to be no form in which paper could be folded and emblazoned which was there wanting; quires of letter paper, and note paper, and notelet paper, from despatches of state to billet-doux, all were ready; great covers with arms and supporters, more moderate ones with 'Berengaria' in letters of glittering fancy, and the destined shells of diminutive effusions marked only with a golden bee. There was another table covered with trinkets and precious toys: snuff-boxes and patch-boxes beautifully painted, exquisite miniatures, rare fans, cups of agate, birds glittering with gems almost as radiant as the tropic plumage they imitated, wild animals cut out of ivory, or formed of fantastic pearls—all the spoils of queens and royal mistresses.

Upon the walls were drawings of her various homes; that of her childhood, as well as of the hearths she ruled and loved. There were a few portraits on the walls also of those whom she ranked as her particular friends. Lord Roehampton was one, another was the Count of Ferroll.

Time went on; on a little table, by the side of evidently her favourite chair, was a book she had been reading. It was a German tale of fame, and Endymion, dropping into her seat, became interested in a volume which hitherto he had never seen, but of which he had heard much.

Perhaps he had been reading for some time; there was a sound, he started and looked up, and then, springing from his chair, he said, 'Something has happened!'

Lady Montfort was quite pale, and the expression of her countenance distressed, but when he said these words she tried to smile, and said, 'No, no, nothing, nothing,—at least nothing to distress you. My lord hopes you will be able to dine with him to-day, and tell him all the news.' And then she threw herself into a chair and sighed. 'I should like to have a good cry, as the servants say—but I never could cry. I will tell you all about it in a moment. You were very good not to go.'

It seems that Lady Montfort saw her lord before the agent, who was waiting, had had his interview, and the opportunity being in every way favourable, she felt the way about obtaining his cousin's seat for Endymion. Lord Montfort quite embraced the proposal. It had never occurred to him. He had no idea that Ferrars contemplated parliament. It was a capital idea. He could not bear reading the parliament reports, and yet he liked to know a little of what was going on. Now, when anything happened of interest, he should have it all from the fountain-head. 'And you must tell him, Berengaria,' he continued, 'that he can come and dine here whenever he likes, in boots. It is a settled thing that M.P.s may dine in boots. I think it a most capital plan. Besides, I know it will please you. You will have your own member.'

Then he rang the bell, and begged Lady Montfort to remain and see the agent. Nothing like the present time for business. They would make all the arrangements at once, and he would ask the agent to dine with them to-day, and so meet Mr. Ferrars.

So the agent entered, and it was all explained to him, calmly and clearly, briefly by my lord, but with fervent amplification by his charming wife. The agent several times attempted to make a remark, but for some time he was unsuccessful; Lady Montfort was so anxious that he should know all about Mr. Ferrars, the most rising young man of the day, the son of the late Right Honourable William Pitt Ferrars, who, had he not died, would probably have been prime minister, and so on.

'Mr. Ferrars seems to be everything we could wish,' said the

agent, 'and as you say, my lady, though he is young, so was Mr. Pitt, and I have little doubt, after what you say, my lady, that it is very likely he will in time become as eminent. But what I came up to town particularly to impress upon my lord is, that if Mr. Odo will not stand again, we are in a very great difficulty.'

'Difficulty about what?' said Lady Montfort impatiently.

'Well, my lady, if Mr. Odo stands, there is great respect for him. The other side would not disturb him. He has been member for some years, and my lord has been very liberal. But the truth is, if Mr. Odo does not stand, we cannot command the seat.'

'Not command the seat! Then our interest must have been terribly neglected.'

'I hope not, my lady,' said the agent. 'The fact is, the property is against us.'

'I thought it was all my lord's.'

'No, my lady; the strong interest in the borough is my Lord Beaumaris. It used to be about equal, but all the new buildings are in Lord Beaumaris' part of the borough. It would not have signified if things had remained as in the old days. The grandfather of the present lord was a Whig, and always supported the Montforts, but that's all changed. The present earl has gone over to the other side, and, I hear, is very strong in his views.'

Lady Montfort had to communicate all this to Endymion. 'You will meet the agent at dinner, but he did not give me a ray of hope. Go now; indeed, I have kept you too long. I am so stricken that I can scarcely command my senses. Only think of our borough being stolen from us by Lord Beaumaris! I have brought you no luck, Endymion; I have done you nothing but mischief; I am miserable. If you had attached yourself to Lady Beaumaris, you might have been a member of parliament.'

CHAPTER LXIX.

In the meantime, the great news being no longer a secret, the utmost excitement prevailed in the world of politics. The Tories had quite made up their minds that the ministry would have resigned, and were sanguine, under such circumstances, of the result. The parliament, which the ministry was going to dissolve, was one which had been elected by their counsel and under their auspices. It was unusual, almost unconstitutional, thus to terminate the body they had created. Nevertheless, the Whigs, never too delicate in such matters, thought they had a chance, and determined not to lose it. One thing they immediately succeeded in, and that was, frightening their opponents. A dissolution with the Tories in opposition was not pleasant to that party; but a dissolution with a cry of 'Cheap bread!' amid a partially starving population, was not exactly the conjuncture of providential circumstances which had long been watched and wished for, and cherished and coddled and proclaimed and promised, by the energetic army of Conservative wire-pullers.

Mr. Tadpole was very restless at the crowded Carlton, speaking to every one, unhesitatingly answering every question, alike cajoling and dictatorial, and yet, all the time, watching the door of the morning room with unquiet anxiety.

'They will never be able to get up the steam, Sir Thomas; the Chartists are against them. The Chartists will never submit to anything that is cheap. In spite of their wild fancies, they are real John Bulls. I beg your pardon, but I see a gentleman I must speak to,' and he rushed towards the door as Waldershare entered.

'Well, what is your news?' asked Mr. Tadpole affecting unconcern.

'I come here for news,' said Waldershare. 'This is my Academus, and you, Tadpole, are my Plato.'

'Well, if you want the words of a wise man, listen to me. If I had a great friend, which Mr. Waldershare probably has,

who wants a great place, these are times in which such a man should show his power.'

'I have a great friend whom I wish to have a great place,' said Waldershare, 'and I think he is quite ready to show his power, if he knew exactly how to exercise it.'

'What I am saying to you is not known to a single person in this room, and to only one out of it, but you may depend upon what I say. Lord Montfort's cousin retires from Northborough to sit for the county. They think they can nominate his successor as a matter of course. A delusion; your friend Lord Beaumaris can command the seat.'

'Well, I think you can depend on Beaumaris,' said Waldershare, much interested.

'I depend upon you,' said Mr. Tadpole with a glance of affectionate credulity. 'The party already owes you much. This will be a crowning service.'

'Beaumaris is rather a queer man to deal with,' said Waldershare; 'he requires gentle handling.'

'All the world says he consults you on everything.'

'All the world, as usual, is wrong,' said Waldershare. 'Lord Beaumaris consults no one except Lady Beaumaris.'

'Well then we shall do,' rejoined Mr. Tadpole triumphantly. 'Our man that I want him to return is a connection of Lady Beaumaris, a Mr. Rodney, very anxious to get into parliament, and rich. I do not know who he is exactly, but it is a good name; say a cousin of Lord Rodney until the election is over, and then they may settle it as they like.'

'A Mr. Rodney,' said Waldershare musingly; 'well, if I hear anything I will let you know. I suppose you are in pretty good spirits?'

'I should like a little sunshine. A cold spring, and now a wet summer, and the certainty of a shocking harvest combined with manufacturing distress spreading daily, is not pleasant, but the English are a discriminating people. They will hardly persuade them that Sir Robert has occasioned the bad harvests.'

'The present men are clearly responsible for all that,' said Waldershare.

There was a reception at Lady Roehampton's this evening.

Very few Tories attended it, but Lady Beaumaris was there. She never lost an opportunity of showing by her presence how grateful she was to Myra for the kindness which had greeted Imogene when she first entered society. Endymion, as was his custom when the opportunity offered, rather hung about Lady Beaumaris. She always welcomed him with unaffected cordiality and evident pleasure. He talked to her, and then gave way to others, and then came and talked to her again, and then he proposed to take her to have a cup of tea, and she assented to the proposal with a brightening eye and a bewitching smile.

'I suppose your friends are very triumphant, Lady Beaumaris?' said Endymion.

'Yes; they naturally are very excited. I confess I am not myself.'

'But you ought to be,' said Endymion. 'You will have an immense position. I should think Lord Beaumaris would have any office he chose, and yours will be the chief house of the party.'

'I do not know that Lord Beaumaris would care to have office, and I hardly think any office would suit him. As for myself, I am obliged to be ambitious, but I have no ambition, or rather I would say, I think I was happier when we all seemed to be on the same side.'

'Well, those were happy days,' said Endymion, 'and these are happy days. And few things make me happier than to see Lady Beaumaris admired and appreciated by every one.'

'I wish you would not call me Lady Beaumaris. That may be, and indeed perhaps is, necessary in society, but when we are alone, I prefer being called by a name which once you always and kindly used.'

'I shall always love the name,' said Endymion, 'and,' he added with some hesitation, 'shall always love her who bears it.'

She involuntarily pressed his arm, though very slightly; and then in rather a hushed and hurried tone she said, 'They were talking about you at dinner to-day. I fear this change of government, if there is to be one, will be injurious to you—losing your private secretaryship to Mr. Wilton, and perhaps other things?'

'Fortune of war,' said Endymion; 'we must bear these haps. But the truth is, I think it not unlikely there may be a change in my life which may be incompatible with retaining my secretaryship under any circumstances.'

'You are not going to be married?' she said quickly.

'Not the slightest idea of such an event.'

'You are too young to marry.'

'Well, I am older than you.'

'Yes; but men and women are different in that matter. Besides, you have too many fair friends to marry, at least at present. What would Lady Roehampton say?'

'Well, I have sometimes thought my sister wished me to marry.'

'But then there are others who are not sisters, but who are equally interested in your welfare,' said Lady Beaumaris, looking up into his face with her wondrous eyes; but the lashes were so long, that it was impossible to decide whether the glance was an anxious one or one half of mockery.

'Well, I do not think I shall ever marry,' said Endymion. 'The change in my life I was alluding to is one by no means of a romantic character. I have some thoughts of trying my luck on the hustings, and getting into parliament.'

'That would be delightful,' said Lady Beaumaris. 'Do you know that it has been one of my dreams that you should be in parliament?'

'Ah! dearest Imogene, for you said I might call you Imogene, you must take care what you say. Remember we are unhappily in different camps. You must not wish me success in my enterprise; quite the reverse; it is more than probable that you will have to exert all your influence against me; yes, canvass against me, and wear hostile ribbons, and use all your irresistible charms to array electors against me, or to detach them from my ranks.'

'Even in jest, you ought not to say such things,' said Lady Beaumaris.

'But I am not in jest, I am in dreadful earnest. Only this morning I was offered a seat, which they told me was secure; but when I inquired into all the circumstances, I found

the interest of Lord Beaumaris so great, that it would be folly for me to attempt it.'

'What seat?' inquired Lady Beaumaris in a low tone.

'Northborough,' said Endymion, 'now held by Lord Montfort's cousin, who is to come in for his county. The seat was offered to me, and I was told I was to be returned without opposition.'

'Lady Montfort offered it to you?' asked Imogene.

'She interested herself for me, and Lord Montfort approved the suggestion. It was described to me as a family seat, but when I looked into the matter, I found that Lord Beaumaris was more powerful than Lord Montfort.'

'I thought that Lady Montfort was irresistible,' said Imogene; 'she carries all before her in society.'

'Society and politics have much to do with each other, but they are not identical. In the present case, Lady Montfort is powerless.'

'And have you formally abandoned the seat?' inquired Lady Beaumaris.

'Not formally abandoned it; that was not necessary, but I have dismissed it from my mind, and for some time have been trying to find another seat, but hitherto without success. In short, in these days it is no longer possible to step into parliament as if you were stepping into a club.'

'If I could do anything, however little?' said Imogene. 'Perhaps Lady Montfort would not like me to interfere?'

'Why not?'

'Oh! I do not know,' and then after some hesitation she added, 'Is she jealous?'

'Jealous! why should she be jealous?'

'Perhaps she has had no cause.'

'You know Lady Montfort. She is a woman of quick and brilliant feeling, the best of friends and a dauntless foe. Her kindness to me from the first moment I made her acquaintance has been inexpressible, and I sincerely believe she is most anxious to serve me. But our party is not very popular at present; there is no doubt the country is against us. It is tired of us. I feel myself the general election will be disastrous.

Liberal seats are not abundant just now, quite the reverse, and though Lady Montfort has done more than any one could under the circumstances, I feel persuaded, though you think her irresistible, she will not succeed.'

'I hardly know her,' said Imogene. 'The world considers her irresistible, and I think you do. Nevertheless, I wish she could have had her way in this matter, and I think it quite a pity that Northborough has turned out not to be a family seat.'

CHAPTER LXX.

There was a dinner-party at Mr. Neuchatel's, to which none were asked but the high government clique. It was the last dinner before the dissolution: 'The dinner of consolation, or hope,' said Lord Roehampton. Lady Montfort was to be one of the guests. She was dressed, and her carriage in the court-yard, and she had just gone in to see her lord before she departed.

Lord Montfort was extremely fond of jewels, and held that you could not see them to advantage, or fairly judge of their water or colour, except on a beautiful woman. When his wife was in grand toilette, and he was under the same roof, he liked her to call on him in her way to her carriage, that he might see her flashing rivières and tiaras, the lustre of her huge pearls, and the splendour of her emeralds and sapphires and rubies.

'Well, Berengaria,' he said in a playful tone, 'you look divine. Never dine out again in a high dress. It distresses me. Bertolini was the only man who ever caught the tournure of your shoulders, and yet I am not altogether satisfied with his work. So, you are going to dine with that good Neuchatel. Remember me kindly to him. There are few men I like better. He is so sensible, knows so much, and so much of what is going on. I should have liked very much to have dined with him, but he is aware of my unfortunate state. Besides, my dear, if I were better I should not have strength for his dinners. They

are really banquets; I cannot stand those ortolans stuffed with truffles and those truffles stuffed with ortolans. Perhaps he will come and dine with us some day off a joint.'

'The Queen of Mesopotamia will be here next week, Simon, and we must really give her what you call a joint, and then we can ask the Neuchatels and a few other people.'

'I was in hopes the dissolution would have carried everybody away,' said Lord Montfort rather woefully. 'I wish the Queen of Mesopotamia were a candidate for some borough; I think she would rather like it.'

'Well, we could not return her, Simon; do not touch on the subject. But what have you got to amuse you to-day?'

'Oh! I shall do very well. I have got the head of the French detective police to dine with me, and another man or two. Besides, I have got here a most amusing book, "Topsy Turvy;" it comes out in numbers. I like books that come out in numbers, as there is a little suspense, and you cannot deprive yourself of all interest by glancing at the last page of the last volume. I think you must read "Topsy Turvy," Berengaria. I am mistaken if you do not hear of it. It is very cynical, which authors, who know a little of the world, are apt to be, and everything is exaggerated, which is another of their faults when they are only a trifle acquainted with manners. A little knowledge of the world is a very dangerous thing, especially in literature. But it is clever, and the man writes a capital style; and style is everything, especially in fiction.'

'And what is the name of the writer, Simon?'

'You never heard of it; I never did; but my secretary, who lives much in Bohemia, and is a member of the Cosmopolitan and knows everything, tells me he has written some things before, but they did not succeed. His name is St. Barbe. I should like to ask him to dinner if I knew how to get at him.'

'Well, adieu! Simon,' and, with an agitated heart, though apparent calmness, she touched his forehead with her lips. 'I expect an unsatisfactory dinner.'

'Adieu! and if you meet poor Ferrars, which I dare say you will, tell him to keep up his spirits. The world is a wheel, and it will all come round right.'

The dinner ought not to have been unsatisfactory, for though there was no novelty among the guests, they were all clever and distinguished persons and united by entire sympathy. Several of the ministers were there, and the Roehamptons, and Mr. Sidney Wilton, and Endymion was also a guest. But the general tone was a little affected and unnatural; forced gaiety, and a levity which displeased Lady Montfort, who fancied she was unhappy because the country was going to be ruined, but whose real cause of dissatisfaction at the bottom of her heart was the affair of 'the family seat.' Her hero, Lord Roehampton, particularly did not please her to-day. She thought him flippant and in bad taste, merely because he would not look dismal and talk gloomily.

'I think we shall do very well,' he said. 'What cry can be better than that of "Cheap bread?" It gives one an appetite at once.'

'But the Corn-Law League says your bread will not be cheap,' said Melchior Neuchatel.

'I wonder whether the League has really any power in the constituencies,' said Lord Roehampton. 'I doubt it. They may have in time, but then in the interval trade will revive. I have just been reading Mr. Thornberry's speech. We shall hear more of that man. You will not be troubled about any of your seats?' he said, in a lower tone of sympathy, addressing Mrs. Neuchatel, who was his immediate neighbour.

'Our seats?' said Mrs. Neuchatel, as if waking from a dream. 'Oh, I know nothing about them, nor do I understand why there is a dissolution. I trust that parliament will not be dissolved without voting the money for the observation of the transit of Venus.'

'I think the Roman Catholic vote will carry us through,' said a minister.

'Talking of Roman Catholics,' said Mr. Wilton, 'is it true that Penruddock has gone over to Rome?'

'No truth in it,' replied a colleague. 'He has gone to Rome—there is no doubt of that, and he has been there some time, but only for distraction. He had overworked himself.'

'He might have been a Dean if he had been a practical man,'

whispered Lady Montfort to Mr. Neuchatel, 'and on the high road to a bishopric.'

'That is what we want, Lady Montfort,' said Mr. Neuchatel; 'we want a few practical men. If we had a practical man as Chancellor of the Exchequer, we should not be in the scrape in which we now are.'

'It is not likely that Penruddock will leave the Church with a change of government possibly impending. We could do nothing for him with his views, but he will wait for Peel.'

'Oh! Peel will never stand those high-fliers. He put the Church into a Lay Commission during his last government.'

'Penruddock will never give up Anglicanism while there is a chance of becoming a Laud. When that chance vanishes, trust my word, Penruddock will make his bow to the Vatican.'

'Well, I must say,' said Lord Roehampton, 'if I were a clergyman I should be a Roman Catholic.'

'Then you could not marry. What a compliment to Lady Roehampton!'

'Nay; it is because I could not marry that I am not a clergyman.'

Endymion had taken Adriana down to dinner. She looked very well, and was more talkative than usual.

'I fear it will be a very great confusion—this general election,' she said. 'Papa was telling us that you think of being a candidate.'

'I am a candidate, but without a seat to captivate at present,' said Endymion; 'but I am not without hopes of making some arrangement.'

'Well, you must tell me what your colours are.'

'And will you wear them?'

'Most certainly; and I will work you a banner if you be victorious.'

'I think I must win with such a prospect.'

'I hope you will win in everything.'

When the ladies retired, Berengaria came and sate by the side of Lady Roehampton.

'What a dreary dinner!' she said.

'Do you think so?'

'Well, perhaps it was my own fault. Perhaps I am not in good cue, but everything seems to me to go wrong.'

'Things sometimes do go wrong, but then they get right.'

'Well, I do not think anything will ever get right with me.'

'Dear Lady Montfort, how can you say such things? You who have, and have always had, the world at your feet—and always will have.'

'I do not know what you mean by having the world at my feet. It seems to me I have no power whatever—I can do nothing. I am vexed about this business of your brother. Our people are so stupid. They have no resource. When I go to them and ask for a seat, I expect a seat, as I would a shawl at Howell and James' if I asked for one. Instead of that they only make difficulties. What our party wants is a Mr. Tadpole; he out-manœuvres them in every corner.'

'Well, I shall be deeply disappointed—deeply pained,' said Lady Roehampton, 'if Endymion is not in this parliament, but if we fail I will not utterly despair. I will continue to do what I have done all my life, exert my utmost will and power to advance him.'

'I thought I had will and power,' said Lady Montfort, 'but the conceit is taken out of me. Your brother was to me a source of great interest, from the first moment that I knew him. His future was an object in life, and I thought I could mould it. What a mistake! Instead of making his fortune I have only dissipated his life.'

'You have been to him the kindest and the most valuable of friends, and he feels it.'

'It is no use being kind, and I am valuable to no one. I often think if I disappeared to-morrow no one would miss me.'

'You are in a morbid mood, dear lady. To-morrow perhaps everything will be right, and then you will feel that you are surrounded by devoted friends, and by a husband who adores you.'

Lady Montfort gave a scrutinising glance at Lady Roehampton as she said this, then shook her head. 'Ah! there it is, dear Myra. You judge from your own happiness; you do not know Lord Montfort. You know how I love him, but I am perfectly convinced he prefers my letters to my society.'

'You see what it is to be a Madame de Sévigné,' said Lady Roehampton, trying to give a playful tone to the conversation.

'You jest,' said Lady Montfort; 'I am quite serious. No one can deceive me; would that they could! I have the fatal gift of reading persons, and penetrating motives, however deep or complicated their character, and what I tell you about Lord Montfort is unhappily too true.'

In the meantime, while this interesting conversation was taking place, the gentleman who had been the object of Lady Montfort's eulogium, the gentleman who always out-manœuvred her friends in every corner, was, though it was approaching midnight, walking up and down Carlton Terrace with an agitated and indignant countenance, and not alone.

'I tell you, Mr. Waldershare, I know it; I have it almost from Lord Beaumaris himself; he has declined to support our man, and no doubt will give his influence to the enemy.'

'I do not believe that Lord Beaumaris has made any engagement whatever.'

'A pretty state of affairs!' exclaimed Mr. Tadpole. 'I do not know what the world has come to. Here are gentlemen expecting high places in the Household, and under-secretaryships of state, and actually giving away our seats to our opponents.'

'There is some family engagement about this seat between the Houses of Beaumaris and Montfort, and Lord Beaumaris, who is a young man, and who does not know as much about these things as you and I do, naturally wants not to make a mistake. But he has promised nothing and nobody. I know, I might almost say I saw the letter, that he wrote to Lord Montfort this day, asking for an interview to-morrow morning on the matter, and Lord Montfort has given him an appointment for to-morrow. This I know.'

'Well, I must leave it to you,' said Mr. Tadpole. 'You must remember what we are fighting for. The constitution is at stake.'

'And the Church,' said Waldershare.

'And the landed interest, you may rely upon it,' said Mr. Tadpole.

'And your Lordship of the Treasury *in posse*, Tadpole. Truly it is a great stake.'

CHAPTER LXXI.

The interview between the heads of the two great houses of Montfort and Beaumaris, on which the fate of a ministry might depend, for it should always be recollected that it was only by a majority of one that Sir Robert Peel had necessitated the dissolution of parliament, was not carried on exactly in the spirit and with the means which would have occurred to and been practised by the race of Tadpoles and Tapers.

Lord Beaumaris was a very young man, handsome, extremely shy, and one who had only very recently mixed with the circle in which he was born. It was under the influence of Imogene that, in soliciting an interview with Lord Montfort, he had taken for him an unusual, not to say unprecedented step. He had conjured up to himself in Lord Montfort the apparition of a haughty Whig peer, proud of his order, prouder of his party, and not over-prejudiced in favour of one who had quitted those sacred ranks, freezing with arrogant reserve and condescending politeness. In short, Lord Beaumaris was extremely nervous when, ushered by many servants through many chambers, there came forward to receive him the most sweetly mannered gentleman alive, who not only gave him his hand, but retained his guest's, saying, 'We are a sort of cousins, I believe, and ought to have been acquainted before, but you know perhaps my wretched state,' though what that was nobody exactly did know, particularly as Lord Montfort was sometimes seen wading in streams breast-high while throwing his skilful line over the rushing waters. 'I remember your grandfather,' he said, 'and with good cause. He pouched me at Harrow, and it was the largest pouch I ever had. One does not forget the first time one had a five-pound note.'

And then when Lord Beaumaris, blushing and with much hesitation, had stated the occasion of his asking for the interview,

that they might settle together about the representation of Northborough in harmony with the old understanding between the families which he trusted would always be maintained, Lord Montfort assured him that he was personally obliged to him by his always supporting Odo, regretted that Odo would retire, and then said if Lord Beaumaris had any brother, cousin, or friend to bring forward, he need hardly say Lord Beaumaris might count upon him. 'I am a Whig,' he continued, 'and so was your father, but I am not particularly pleased with the sayings and doings of my people. Between ourselves, I think they have been in a little too long, and if they do anything very strong, if, for instance, they give office to O'Connell, I should not be at all surprised if I were myself to sit on the cross benches.'

It seems there was no member of the Beaumaris family who wished at this juncture to come forward, and being assured of this, Lord Montfort remarked there was a young man of promise who much wished to enter the House of Commons, not unknown, he believed, to Lord Beaumaris, and that was Mr. Ferrars. He was the son of a distinguished man, now departed, who in his day had been a minister of state. Lord Montfort was quite ready to support Mr. Ferrars, if Lord Beaumaris approved of the selection, but he placed himself entirely in his hands

Lord Beaumaris, blushing, said he quite approved of the selection; knew Mr. Ferrars very well, and liked him very much; and if Lord Montfort sanctioned it, would speak to Mr. Ferrars himself. He believed Mr. Ferrars was a Liberal, but he agreed with Lord Montfort, that in these days gentlemen must be all of the same opinion if not on the same side, and so on. And then they talked of fishing appropriately to a book of very curious flies that was on the table, and they agreed if possible to fish together in some famous waters that Lord Beaumaris had in Hampshire, and then, as he was saying farewell, Lord Montfort added, 'Although I never pay visits, because really in my wretched state I cannot, there is no reason why our wives should not know each other. Will you permit Lady Montfort to have the honour of paying her respects to Lady Beaumaris?'

Talleyrand or Metternich could not have conducted an interview more skilfully. But these were just the things that Lord

Montfort did not dislike doing. His great good nature was not disturbed by a single inconvenient circumstance, and he enjoyed the sense of his adroitness.

The same day the cards of Lord and Lady Montfort were sent to Piccadilly Terrace, and on the next day the cards of Lord and Lady Beaumaris were returned to Montfort House. And on the following day, Lady Montfort, accompanied by Lady Roehampton, would find Lady Beaumaris at home, and after a charming visit, in which Lady Montfort, though natural to the last degree, displayed every quality which could fascinate even a woman, when she put her hand in that of Imogene to say farewell, added, 'I am delighted to find that we are cousins.'

A few days after this interview, parliament was dissolved. It was the middle of a wet June, and the season received its *coup de grâce*. Although Endymion had no rival, and apparently no prospect of a contest, his labours as a candidate were not slight. The constituency was numerous, and every member of it expected to be called upon. To each Mr. Ferrars had to expound his political views, and to receive from each a cordial assurance or a churlish criticism. All this he did and endured, accompanied by about fifty of the principal inhabitants, members of his committee, who insisted on never leaving his side, and prompting him at every new door which he entered with contradictory reports of the political opinions of the indwellers, or confidential intimations how they were to be managed and addressed.

The principal and most laborious incidents of the day were festivals which they styled luncheons, when the candidate and the ambulatory committee were quartered on some principal citizen with an elaborate banquet of several courses, and in which Mr. Ferrars' health was always pledged in sparkling bumpers. After the luncheon came two or three more hours of what was called canvassing; then, in a state of horrible repletion, the fortunate candidate, who had no contest, had to dine with another principal citizen, with real turtle soup, and gigantic turbots, *entrées* in the shape of volcanic curries, and rigid venison, sent as a compliment by a neighbouring peer. This last ceremony was necessarily

hurried, as Endymion had every night to address in some ward a body of the electors.

When this had been going on for a few days, the borough was suddenly placarded with posting bills in colossal characters of true blue, warning the Conservative electors not to promise their votes, as a distinguished candidate of the right sort would certainly come forward. At the same time there was a paragraph in a local journal that a member of a noble family, illustrious in the naval annals of the country, would, if sufficiently supported, solicit the suffrages of the independent electors.

'We think, by the allusion to the navy, that it must be Mr. Hood of Acreley,' said Lord Beaumaris' agent to Mr. Ferrars, 'but he has not the ghost of a chance. I will ride over and see him in the course of the day.'

This placard was of course Mr. Tadpole's last effort, but that worthy gentleman soon forgot his mortification about Northborough in the general triumph of his party. The Whigs were nowhere, though Mr. Ferrars was returned without opposition, and in the month of August, still wondering at the rapid, strange, and even mysterious incidents, that had so suddenly and so swiftly changed his position and prospects in life, took his seat in that House in whose galleries he had so long humbly attended as the private secretary of a cabinet minister.

His friends were still in office, though the country had sent up a majority of ninety against them, and Endymion took his seat behind the Treasury bench, and exactly behind Lord Roehampton. The debate on the address was protracted for three nights, and then they divided at three o'clock in the morning, and then all was over. Lord Roehampton, who had vindicated the ministry with admirable vigour and felicity, turned round to Endymion, and smiling said in the sweetest tone, 'I did not enlarge on our greatest feat, namely, that we had governed the country for two years without a majority. Peel would never have had the pluck to do that.'

Notwithstanding the backslidings of Lord Beaumaris and the unprincipled conduct of Mr. Waldershare, they were both rewarded as the latter gentleman projected—Lord Beaumaris accepted a high post in the Household, and Mr. Waldershare was appointed

Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Tadpole was a little glum about it, but it was inevitable. 'The fact is,' as the world agreed, 'Lady Beaumaris is the only Tory woman. They have nobody who can receive except her.'

The changes in the House of Commons were still greater than those in the administration. Never were so many new members, and Endymion watched them, during the first days, and before the debate on the address, taking the oaths at the table in batches with much interest. Mr. Bertie Tremaine was returned, and his brother, Mr. Tremaine Bertie. Job Thornberry was member for a manufacturing town, with which he was not otherwise connected. Hortensius was successful, and Mr. Vigo for a metropolitan borough, but what pleased Endymion more than anything was the return of his valued friend Trenchard, who a short time before had acceded to the paternal estate; all these gentlemen were Liberals, and were destined to sit on the same side of the House as Endymion.

After the fatal vote, the Whigs all left town. Society in general had been previously greatly dispersed, but parliament had to remain sitting until October.

'We are going to Princedown,' Lady Montfort said one day to Endymion, 'and we had counted on seeing you there, but I have been thinking much of your position since, and I am persuaded, that we must sacrifice pleasure to higher objects. This is really a crisis in your life, and much, perhaps everything, depends on your not making a mistake now. What I want to see you is a great statesman. This is a political economy parliament, both sides alike thinking of the price of corn and all that. Finance and commerce are everybody's subjects, and are most convenient to make speeches about for men who cannot speak French and who have had no education. Real politics are the possession and distribution of power. I want to see you give your mind to foreign affairs. There you will have no rivals. There are a great many subjects which Lord Roehampton cannot take up, but which you could very properly, and you will have always the benefit of his counsel, and, when necessary, his parliamentary assistance; but foreign affairs are not to be mastered by mere reading. Bookworms

do not make chancellors of state. You must become acquainted with the great actors in the great scene. There is nothing like personal knowledge of the individuals who control the high affairs. That has made the fortune of Lord Roehampton. What I think you ought to do, without doubt ought to do, is to take advantage of this long interval before the meeting of parliament, and go to Paris. Paris is now the Capital of Diplomacy. It is not the best time of the year to go there, but you will meet a great many people of the diplomatic world, and if the opportunity offers, you can vary the scene, and go to some baths which princes and ministers frequent. The Count of Ferroll is now at Paris, and minister for his court. You know him; that is well. But he is my greatest friend, and, as you know, we habitually correspond. He will do everything for you, I am sure, for my sake. It is not pleasant to be separated; I do not wish to conceal that; I should have enjoyed your society at Princedown, but I am doing right, and you will some day thank me for it. We must soften the pang of separation by writing to each other every day, so when we meet again it will only be as if we had parted yesterday. Besides—who knows?—I may run over myself to Paris in the winter. My lord always liked Paris; the only place he ever did, but I am not very sanguine he will go; he is so afraid of being asked to dinner by our ambassador.'

CHAPTER LXXII.

In all lives, the highest and the humblest, there is a crisis in the formation of character, and in the bent of the disposition. It comes from many causes, and from some which on the surface are apparently even trivial. It may be a book, a speech, a sermon; a man or a woman; a great misfortune or a burst of prosperity. But the result is the same; a sudden revelation to ourselves of our secret purpose, and a recognition of our perhaps long shadowed, but now masterful convictions.

A crisis of this kind occurred to Endymion the day when

he returned to his chambers, after having taken the oaths and his seat in the House of Commons. He felt the necessity of being alone. For nearly the last three months he had been the excited actor in a strange and even mysterious drama. There had been for him no time to reflect; all he could aim at was to comprehend, and if possible control, the present and urgent contingency; he had been called upon, almost unceasingly, to do or to say something sudden and unexpected; and it was only now, when the crest of the ascent had been reached, that he could look around him and consider the new world opening to his gaze.

The greatest opportunity that can be offered to an Englishman was now his—a seat in the House of Commons. It was his almost in the first bloom of youth, and yet after advantageous years of labour and political training, and it was combined with a material independence on which he never could have counted. A love of power, a passion for distinction, a noble pride, which had been native to his early disposition, but which had apparently been crushed by the enormous sorrows and misfortunes of his childhood, and which had vanished, as it were, before the sweetness of that domestic love which had been the solace of his adversity, now again stirred their dim and mighty forms in his renovated, and, as it were, inspired consciousness. 'If this has happened at twenty-two,' thought Endymion, 'what may not occur if the average life of man be allotted to me? At any rate, I will never think of anything else. I have a purpose in life, and I will fulfil it. It is a charm that its accomplishment would be the most grateful result to the two beings I most love in the world.'

So when Lady Montfort shortly after opened her views to Endymion as to his visiting Paris, and his purpose in so doing, the seeds were thrown on a willing soil, and he embraced her counsels with the deepest interest. His intimacy with the Count of Ferroll was the completing event of this epoch of his life.

Their acquaintance had been slight in England, for after the Montfort Tournament the Count had been appointed to Paris, where he was required; but he received Endymion with a

cordiality which contrasted with his usual demeanour, which, though frank, was somewhat cynical.

'This is not a favourable time to visit Paris,' he said, 'so far as society is concerned. There is some business stirring in the diplomatic world, which has re-assembled the fraternity for the moment, and the King is at St. Cloud, but you may make some acquaintances which may be desirable, and at any rate look about you and clear the ground for the coming season. I do not despair of our dear friend coming over in the winter. It is one of the hopes that keep me alive. What a woman! You may count yourself fortunate in having such a friend. I do. I am not particularly fond of female society. Women chatter too much. But I prefer the society of a first-rate woman to that of any man; and Lady Montfort is a first-rate woman—I think the greatest since Louise of Savoy; infinitely beyond the Princesse d'Ursins.'

The 'business that was then stirring in the diplomatic world,' at a season when the pleasures of Parisian society could not distract him, gave Endymion a rare opportunity of studying that singular class of human beings which is accustomed to consider states and nations as individuals, and speculate on their quarrels and misunderstandings, and the remedies which they require, in a tongue peculiar to themselves, and in language which often conveys a meaning exactly opposite to that which it seems to express. Diplomacy is hospitable, and a young Englishman of graceful mien, well introduced, and a member of the House of Commons—that awful assembly which produces those dreaded blue books which strike terror in the boldest of foreign statesmen—was not only received, but courted, in the interesting circle in which Endymion found himself.

There he encountered men grey with the fame and wisdom of half a century of deep and lofty action, men who had struggled with the first Napoleon, and had sat in the Congress of Vienna; others, hardly less celebrated, who had been suddenly borne to high places by the revolutionary wave of 1830, and who had justly retained their exalted posts when so many competitors with an equal chance had long ago, with equal justice, subsided into the obscurity from which they ought never to have emerged.

Around these chief personages were others not less distinguished by their abilities, but a more youthful generation, who knew how to wait, and were always prepared or preparing for the inevitable occasion when it arrived—fine and trained writers, who could interpret in sentences of graceful adroitness the views of their chiefs; or sages in precedents, walking dictionaries of diplomacy, and masters of every treaty; and private secretaries reading human nature at a glance, and collecting every shade of opinion for the use and guidance of their principals.

Whatever their controversies in the morning, their critical interviews and their secret alliances, all were smiles and graceful badinage at the banquet and the reception; as if they had only come to Paris to show their brilliant uniforms, their golden fleeces and their grand crosses, and their broad ribbons with more tints than the iris.

'I will not give them ten years,' said the Count of Ferroll, lighting his cigarette, and addressing Endymion on their return from one of these assemblies; 'I sometimes think hardly five.'

'But where will the blow come from?'

'Here; there is no movement in Europe except in France, and here it will always be a movement of subversion.'

'A pretty prospect!'

'The sooner you realise it the better. The system here is supported by journalists and bankers; two influential classes, but the millions care for neither; rather, I should say, dislike both.'

'Will the change affect Europe?'

'Inevitably. You rightly say Europe, for that is a geographical expression. There is no State in Europe; I exclude your own country, which belongs to every division of the globe, and is fast becoming more commercial than political, and I exclude Russia, for she is essentially oriental, and her future will be entirely the East.'

'But there is Germany!'

'Where? I cannot find it on the maps. Germany is divided into various districts, and when there is a war, they are ranged on different sides. Notwithstanding our reviews and annual encampments, Germany is practically as weak as Italy. We

have some kingdoms who are allowed to play at being first-rate powers; but it is mere play. They no more command events than the King of Naples or the Duke of Modena.'

'Then is France periodically to overrun Europe?'

'So long as it continues to be merely Europe.'

A close intimacy occurred between Endymion and the Count of Ferroll. He not only became a permanent guest at the official residence, but when the Conference broke up, the Count invited Endymion to be his companion to some celebrated baths, where they would meet not only many of his late distinguished colleagues, but their imperial and royal masters, seeking alike health and relaxation at this famous rendezvous.

'You will find it of the first importance in public life,' said the Count of Ferroll, 'to know personally those who are carrying on the business of the world; so much depends on the character of an individual, his habits of thought, his prejudices, his superstitions, his social weaknesses, his health. Conducting affairs without this advantage is, in effect, an affair of stationery; it is pens and paper who are in communication, not human beings.'

The brother-in-law of Lord Roehampton was a sort of personage. It was very true that distinguished man was no longer minister, but he had been minister for a long time, and had left a great name. Foreigners rarely know more than one English minister at a time, but they compensated for their ignorance of the aggregate body by even exaggerating the qualities of the individual with whom they are acquainted. Lord Roehampton had conducted the affairs of his country always in a courteous, but still in a somewhat haughty spirit. He was easy and obliging, and conciliatory in little matters, but where the credit, or honour, or large interests of England were concerned, he acted with conscious authority. On the continent of Europe, though he sometimes incurred the depreciation of the smaller minds, whose self-love he may not have sufficiently spared, by the higher spirits he was feared and admired, and they knew, when he gave his whole soul to an affair, that they were dealing with a master.

Endymion was presented to emperors and kings, and he made his way with these exalted personages. He found them different

from what he had expected. He was struck by their intimate acquaintance with affairs, and by the serenity of their judgment. The life was a pleasant as well as an interesting one. Where there are crowned heads, there are always some charming women. Endymion found himself in a delightful circle. Long days and early hours, and a beautiful country, renovate the spirit as well as the physical frame. Excursions to romantic forests, and visits to picturesque ruins, in the noon of summer, are enchanting, especially with princesses for your companions, bright and accomplished. Yet, notwithstanding some distractions, Endymion never omitted writing to Lady Montfort every day.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

The season at Paris, which commenced towards the end of the year, was a lively one, and especially interesting to Endymion, who met there a great many of his friends. After his visit to the baths he had travelled alone for a few weeks, and saw some famous places of which he had long heard. A poet was then sitting on the throne of Bavaria, and was realising his dreams in the creation of an ideal capital. The Black Forest is a land of romance. He saw Walhalla, too, crowning the Danube with the genius of Germany, as mighty as the stream itself. Pleasant it is to wander among the quaint cities here clustering together: Nuremberg with all its ancient art, imperial Augsburg, and Würzburg with its priestly palace, beyond the splendour of many kings. A summer in Suabia is a great joy.

But what a contrast to the Rue de la Paix, bright and vivacious, in which he now finds himself, and the companion of the Neuchatel family! Endymion had only returned to Paris the previous evening, and the Neuchatels had preceded him by a week; so they had seen everybody and could tell him everything. Lord and Lady Beaumaris were there, and Mrs. Rodney their companion, her husband detained in London by some mysterious business; it was thought a seat in parliament, which Mr. Tadpole had persuaded him might be secured on a vacancy

occasioned by a successful petition. They had seen the Count of Ferroll, who was going to dine with them that day, and Endymion was invited to meet him. It was Adriana's first visit to Paris, and she seemed delighted with it; but Mrs. Neuchatel preferred the gay capital when it was out of season. Mr. Neuchatel himself was always in high spirits,—sanguine and self-satisfied. He was an Orleanist, had always been so, and sympathised with the apparently complete triumph of his principles—'real liberal principles, no nonsense; there was more gold in the Bank of France than in any similar establishment in Europe. After all, wealth is the test of the welfare of a people, and the test of wealth is the command of the precious metals. Eh! Mr. Member of Parliament?' And his eye flashed fire, and he seemed to smack his lips at the very thought and mention of these delicious circumstances.

They were in a jeweller's shop, and Mrs. Neuchatel was choosing a trinket for a wedding present. She seemed infinitely distressed. 'What do you think of this, Adriana? It is simple and in good taste. I should like it for myself, and yet I fear it might not be thought fine enough.'

'This is pretty, mamma, and new,' and she held before her mother a bracelet of much splendour.

'Oh, no! that will never do, dear Adriana; they will say we are purse-proud.'

'I am afraid they will always say that, mamma,' and she sighed.

'It is a long time since we all separated,' said Endymion to Adriana.

'Months! Mr. Sidney Wilton said you were the first runaway. I think you were quite right. Your new life now will be fresh to you. If you had remained, it would only have been associated with defeat and discomfiture.'

'I am so happy to be in parliament, that I do not think I could ever associate such a life with discomfiture.'

'Does it make you very happy?' said Adriana, looking at him rather earnestly.

'Very happy.'

'I am glad of that.'

The Neuchatels had a house at Paris—one of the fine hotels of the First Empire. It was inhabited generally by one of the nephews, but it was always ready to receive them with every luxury and every comfort. But Mrs. Neuchatel herself particularly disliked Paris, and she rarely accompanied her husband in his frequent but brief visits to the gay city. She had yielded on this occasion to the wish of Adriana, whom she had endeavoured to bring up in a wholesome prejudice against French taste and fashions.

The dinner to-day was exquisite, in a chamber of many-coloured marbles, and where there was no marble there was gold, and when the banquet was over, they repaired to saloons hung with satin of a delicate tint which exhibited to perfection a choice collection of Greuse and Vanloo. Mr. Sidney Wilton dined there as well as the Count of Ferroll, some of the French ministers, and two or three illustrious Orleanist celebrities of literature, who acknowledged and emulated the matchless conversational powers of Mrs. Neuchatel. Lord and Lady Beaumaris and Mrs. Rodney completed the party.

Sylvia was really peerless. She was by birth half a Frenchwoman, and she compensated for her deficiency in the other moiety, by a series of exquisite costumes, in which she mingled with the spell-born fashion of France her own singular genius in dress. She spoke not much, but looked prettier than ever; a little haughty, and now and then faintly smiling. What was most remarkable about her was her convenient and complete want of memory. Sylvia had no past. She could not have found her way to Warwick Street to save her life. She conversed with Endymion with ease and not without gratification, but from all she said, you might have supposed that they had been born in the same sphere, and always lived in the same sphere, that sphere being one peopled by duchesses and countesses and gentlemen of fashion and ministers of state.

Lady Beaumaris was different from her sister almost in all respects, except in beauty, though her beauty even was of a higher style than that of Mrs. Rodney. Imogene was quite natural, though refined. She had a fine disposition. All her impulses were good and naturally noble. She had a greater

intellectual range than Sylvia, and was much more cultivated. This she owed to her friendship with Mr. Waldershare, who was entirely devoted to her, and whose main object in life was to make everything contribute to her greatness. 'I hope he will come here next week,' she said to Endymion. 'I heard from him to-day. He is at Venice. And he gives me such lovely descriptions of that city, that I shall never rest till I have seen it and glided in a gondola.'

'Well, that you can easily do.'

'Not so easily. It will never do to interfere with my lord's hunting—and when hunting is over there is always something else—Newmarket, or the House of Lords, or rook-shooting.'

'I must say there is something delightful about Paris, which you meet nowhere else,' said Mr. Sidney Wilton to Endymion. 'For my part, it has the same effect on me as a bottle of champagne. When I think of what we were doing this time last year—those dreadful November cabinets—I shudder! By the by, the Count of Ferroll says there is a chance of Lady Montfort coming here; have you heard anything?'

Endymion knew all about it, but he was too discreet even to pretend to exclusive information on that head. He thought it might be true, but supposed it depended on my lord.

'Oh! Montfort will never come. He will bolt at the last moment when the hall is full of packages. Their very sight will frighten him, and he will steal down to Princedown and read "Don Quixote."'

Sidney Wilton was quite right. Lady Montfort arrived without her lord. 'He threw me over almost as we were getting into the carriage, and I had quite given it up when dear Lady Roehampton came to my rescue. She wanted to see her brother, and—here we are.'

The arrival of these two great ladies gave a stimulant to gaieties which were already excessive. The court and the ministers rivalled the balls and the banquets which were profusely offered by the ambassadors and bankers. Even the great faubourg relaxed, and its halls of high ceremony and mysterious splendour were opened to those who in London had extended to many of their order a graceful and abounding hospitality. It

was with difficulty, however, that they persuaded Lady Montfort to honour with her presence the embassy of her own court.

'I dined with those people once,' she said to Endymion, 'but I confess when I thought of those dear Granvilles, their *entrées* stuck in my throat.'

There was, however, no lack of diplomatic banquets for the successor of Louise of Savoy. The splendid hotel of the Count of Ferroll was the scene of festivals not to be exceeded in Paris, and all in honour of this wondrous dame. Sometimes they were feasts, sometimes they were balls, sometimes they were little dinners, consummate and select, sometimes large receptions, multifarious and amusing. Her pleasure was asked every morn, and whenever she was disengaged, she issued orders to his devoted household. His boxes at opera or play were at her constant disposal; his carriages were at her command, and she rode, in his society, the most beautiful horses in Paris.

The Count of Ferroll had wished that both ladies should have taken up their residence at his mansion.'

'But I think we had better not,' said Lady Montfort to Myra. 'After all, there is nothing like "my crust of bread and liberty," and so I think we had better stay at the Bristol.'

CHAPTER LXXIV.

'Go and talk to Adriana,' said Lady Roehampton to her brother. 'It seems to me you never speak to her.'

Endymion looked a little confused.

'Lady Montfort has plenty of friends here,' his sister continued. 'You are not wanted, and you should always remember those who have been our earliest and kindest friends.'

There was something in Lady Roehampton's words and look which rather jarred upon him. Anything like reproach or dissatisfaction from those lips and from that countenance, sometimes a little anxious but always affectionate, not to say adoring, confused and even agitated him. He was tempted to reply, but,

exercising successfully the self-control which was the result rather of his life than of his nature, he said nothing, and, in obedience to the intimation, immediately approached Miss Neuchatel.

About this time Waldershare arrived at Paris, full of magnificent dreams which he called plans. He was delighted with his office; it was much the most important in the government, and more important because it was not in the cabinet. Well managed, it was power without responsibility. He explained to Lady Beaumaris that an Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, with his chief in the House of Lords, was 'master of the situation.' What the situation was, and what the under-secretary was to master, he did not yet deign to inform Imogene; but her trust in Waldershare was implicit, and she repeated to Lord Beaumaris, and to Mrs. Rodney, with an air of mysterious self-complacency, that Mr. Waldershare was 'master of the situation.' Mrs. Rodney fancied that this was the correct and fashionable title of an under-secretary of state. Mr. Waldershare was going to make a collection of portraits of Under-Secretaries for Foreign Affairs whose chiefs had been in the House of Lords. It would be a collection of the most eminent statesmen that England had ever produced. For the rest, during his Italian tour, Waldershare seemed to have conducted himself with distinguished discretion, and had been careful not to solicit an audience of the Duke of Modena in order to renew his oath of allegiance.

When Lady Montfort successfully tempted Lady Roehampton to be her travelling companion to Paris, the contemplated visit was to have been a short one—'a week, perhaps ten days at the outside.' The outside had been not inconsiderably passed, and yet the beautiful Berengaria showed no disposition of returning to England. Myra was uneasy at her own protracted absence from her lord, and having made a last, but fruitless effort to induce Lady Montfort to accompany her, she said one day to Endymion, 'I think I must ask you to take me back. And indeed you ought to be with my lord some little time before the meeting of Parliament.'

Endymion was really of the same opinion, though he was conscious of the social difficulty which he should have to en-

counter in order to effect his purpose. Occasionally a statesman in opposition is assisted by the same private secretary who was his confidant when in office; but this is not always the case—perhaps not even generally. In the present instance, the principal of Lord Roehampton's several secretaries had been selected from the permanent clerks in the Foreign Office itself, and therefore when his chief retired from his official duties, the private secretary resumed his previous post, an act which necessarily terminated all relations between himself and the late minister, save those of private, though often still intimate, acquaintance.

Now one of the great objects of Lady Roehampton for a long time had been, that her brother should occupy a confidential position near her husband. The desire had originally been shared, and even warmly, by Lady Montfort; but the unexpected entrance of Endymion into the House of Commons had raised a technical difficulty in this respect which seemed to terminate the cherished prospect. Myra, however, was resolved not to regard these technical difficulties, and was determined to establish at once the intimate relations she desired between her husband and her brother. This purpose had been one of the principal causes which induced her to accompany Lady Montfort to Paris. She wanted to see Endymion, to see what he was about, and to prepare him for the future which she contemplated.

The view which Lady Montfort took of these matters was very different from that of Lady Roehampton. Lady Montfort was in her riding habit, leaning back in an easy chair, with her whip in one hand and the 'Charivari' in the other, and she said, 'Are you not going to ride to-day, Endymion?'

'I think not. I wanted to talk to you a little about my plans, Lady Montfort.'

'Your plans? Why should you have any plans?'

'Well, Lady Roehampton is about to return to England, and she proposes I should go with her.'

'Why?'

And then Endymion entered into the whole case, the desirableness of being with Lord Roehampton before the meeting of parliament, of assisting him, working with him, acting for

him, and all the other expedient circumstances of the situation.

Lady Montfort said nothing. Being of an eager nature, it was rather her habit to interrupt those who addressed her, especially on matters she deemed disagreeable. Her husband used to say, 'Berengaria is a charming companion, but if she would only listen a little more, she would have so much more to tell me.' On the present occasion, Endymion had no reason to complain that he had not a fair opportunity of stating his views and wishes. She was quite silent, changed colour occasionally, bit her beautiful lip, and gently but constantly lashed her beautiful riding habit. When he paused, she inquired if he had done, and he assenting, she said, 'I think the whole thing preposterous. What can Lord Roehampton have to do before the meeting of parliament? He has not got to write the Queen's speech. The only use of being in opposition is that we may enjoy ourselves. The best thing that Lord Roehampton and all his friends can do is to travel for a couple of years. Ask the Count of Ferroll what he thinks of the situation. He will tell you that he never knew one more hopeless. Taxes and tariffs—that's the future of England, and, so far as I can see, it may go on for ever. The government here desires nothing better than what they call Peace. What they mean by peace is agiotage, shares at a premium, and bubble companies. The whole thing is corrupt, as it ever must be when government is in the hands of a mere middle class, and that, too, a limited one; but it may last hopelessly long, and in the meantime, "Vive la bagatelle!"'

'These are very different views from those which, I had understood, were to guide us in opposition,' said Endymion, amazed.

'There is no opposition,' rejoined Lady Montfort, somewhat tartly. 'For a real opposition there must be a great policy. If your friend, Lord Roehampton, when he was settling the Levant, had only seized upon Egypt, we should have been somewhere. Now, we are the party who wanted to give, not even cheap bread to the people, but only cheaper bread. Faugh!'

'Well, I do not think the occupation of Egypt in the present state of our finances'——

'Do not talk to me about "the present state of our finances." You are worse than Mr. Sidney Wilton. The Count of Ferroll says that a ministry which is upset by its finances must be essentially imbecile. And that, too, in England—the richest country in the world!'

'Well, I think the state of the finances had something to do with the French Revolution,' observed Endymion quietly.

'The French Revolution! You might as well talk of the fall of the Roman Empire. The French Revolution was founded on nonsense—on the rights of man; when all sensible people in every country are now agreed, that man has no rights whatever.'

'But, dearest Lady Montfort,' said Endymion, in a somewhat deprecating tone, 'about my returning; for that is the real subject on which I wished to trouble you.'

'You have made up your mind to return,' she replied. 'What is the use of consulting me with a foregone conclusion? I suppose you think it a compliment.'

'I should be very sorry to do anything without consulting you,' said Endymion.

'The worst person in the world to consult,' said Lady Montfort impatiently. 'If you want advice, you had better go to your sister. Men who are guided by their sisters seldom make very great mistakes. They are generally so prudent; and, I must say, I think a prudent man quite detestable.'

Endymion turned pale, his lips quivered. What might have been the winged words they sent forth it is now impossible to record, for at that moment the door opened, and the servant announced that her ladyship's horse was at the door. Lady Montfort jumped up quickly, and saying, 'Well, I suppose I shall see you before you go,' disappeared.

CHAPTER LXXV.

In the meantime, Lady Roehampton was paying her farewell visit to her former pupil. They were alone, and Adriana was hanging on her neck and weeping.

'We were so happy,' she murmured.

'And are so happy, and will be,' said Myra.

'I feel I shall never be happy again,' sighed Adriana.

'You deserve to be the happiest of human beings, and you will be.'

'Never, never!'

Lady Roehampton could say no more; she pressed her friend to her heart, and left the room in silence.

When she arrived at her hotel, her brother was leaving the house. His countenance was disquieted; he did not greet her with that mantling sunniness of aspect which was natural to him when they met.

'I have made all my farewells,' she said; 'and how have you been getting on?' And she invited him to re-enter the hotel.

'I am ready to depart at this moment,' he said somewhat fiercely, 'and was only thinking how I could extricate myself from that horrible dinner to-day at the Count of Ferroll's.'

'Well, that is not difficult,' said Myra; 'you can write a note here if you like, at once. I think you must have seen quite enough of the Count of Ferroll and his friends.'

Endymion sat down at the table, and announced his intended non-appearance at the Count's dinner, for it could not be called an excuse. When he had finished, his sister said—

'Do you know, we were nearly having a travelling companion to-morrow?'

He looked up with a blush, for he fancied she was alluding to some previous scheme of Lady Montfort. 'Indeed!' he said, 'and who?'

'Adriana.'

'Adriana!' he repeated, somewhat relieved; 'would she leave her family?'

'She had a fancy, and I am sure I do not know any companion I could prefer to her. She is the only person of whom I could truly say, that every time I see her, I love her more.'

'She seemed to like Paris very much,' said Endymion a little embarrassed.

'The first part of her visit,' said Lady Roehampton, 'she liked it amazingly. But my arrival and Lady Montfort's, I fear, broke up their little parties. You were a great deal with the Neuchatels before we came?'

'They are such a good family,' said Endymion; 'so kind, so hospitable, such true friends. And Mr. Neuchatel himself is one of the shrewdest men that probably ever lived. I like talking with him, or rather, I like to hear him talk.'

'O Endymion,' said Lady Roehampton, 'if you were to marry Adriana, my happiness would be complete.'

'Adriana will never marry,' said Endymion; 'she is afraid of being married for her money. I know twenty men who would marry her, if they thought there was a chance of being accepted; and the best man, Eusford, did make her an offer—that I know. And where could she find a match more suitable?—high rank, and large estate, and a man that everybody speaks well of.'

'Adriana will never marry except for the affections; there you are right, Endymion; she must love and she must be loved; but that is not very unreasonable in a person who is young, pretty, accomplished, and intelligent.'

'She is all that,' said Endymion moodily.

'And she loves you,' said Lady Roehampton.

Endymion rather started, looked up for a moment at his sister, and then withdrew as hastily an agitated glance, and then with his eyes on the ground said, in a voice half murmuring, and yet scoffingly: 'I should like to see Mr. Neuchatel's face were I to ask permission to marry his daughter. I suppose he would not kick me downstairs; that is out of fashion; but he certainly would never ask me to dinner again, and that would be a sacrifice.'

'You jest, Endymion; I am not jesting.'

'There are some matters that can only be treated as a jest; and my marriage with Miss Neuchatel is one.'

'It would make you one of the most powerful men in England,' said his sister.

'Other impossible events would do the same.'

'It is not impossible; it is very possible,' said his sister, 'believe me, trust in me. The happiness of their daughter is more precious to the Neuchatels even than their fortune.'

'I do not see why, at my age, I should be in such a hurry to marry,' said Endymion.

'You cannot marry too soon, if by so doing you obtain the great object of life. Early marriages are to be deprecated, especially for men, because they are too frequently imprudent; but when a man can marry while he is young, and at once realise, by so doing, all the results which successful time may bring to him, he should not hesitate.'

'I hesitate very much,' said Endymion. 'I should hesitate very much, even if affairs were as promising as I think you may erroneously assume.'

'But you must not hesitate, Endymion. We must never forget the great object for which we two live, for which, I believe, we were born twins—to rebuild our house; to raise it from poverty, and ignominy, and misery and squalid shame, to the rank and position which we demand, and which we believe we deserve. Did I hesitate when an offer of marriage was made to me, and the most unexpected that could have occurred? True it is, I married the best and greatest of men, but I did not know that when I accepted his hand. I married him for your sake, I married him for my own sake, for the sake of the house of Ferrars, which I wished to release and raise from its pit of desolation. I married him to secure for us both that opportunity for our qualities which they had lost, and which I believed, if enjoyed, would render us powerful and great.'

Endymion rose from his seat and kissed his sister. 'So long as you live,' he said, 'we shall never be ignominious.'

'Yes, but I am nothing; I am not a man, I am not a Ferrars. The best of me is that I may be a transient help to you. It is you who must do the deed. I am wearied of hearing you described as Lady Roehampton's brother, or Lord Roehampton's brother-in-law. I shall never be content till you are greater

than we are, and there is but one and only one immediate way of accomplishing it; it is by this marriage—and a marriage with whom? with an angelic being!'

'You take me somewhat by surprise, Myra. My thoughts have not been upon this matter. I cannot fairly describe myself at this moment as a marrying man.'

'I know what you mean. You have female friendships, and I approve of them. They are invaluable to youth, and you have been greatly favoured in this respect. They have been a great assistance to you; beware lest they become a hindrance. A few years of such feelings in a woman's life are a blazoned page, and when it is turned she has many other chapters, though they may not be as brilliant or adorned. But these few years in a man's life may be, and in your case certainly would be, the very marrow of his destiny. During the last five or six years, ever since our emancipation, there has been a gradual but continuous development in your life. All has been preparatory for a position which you have acquired. That position may lead to anything—in your case, I will still believe, to everything—but there must be no faltering. Having crossed the Alps, you must not find a Capua. I speak to you as I have not spoken to you of late, because it was not necessary. But here is an opportunity which must not be lost. I feel half inspired, as when we parted in our misery at Hurstley, and I bade you, poor and obscure, go forth and conquer the world.'

Late on the night of the day, their last day at Paris, on which this conversation took place, Endymion received a note in a well-known handwriting, and it ran thus:

'If it be any satisfaction to you to know that you made me very unhappy by not dining here to-day, you may be gratified. I am very unhappy. I know that I was unkind this morning, and rude, but as my anger was occasioned by your leaving me, my conduct might annoy but surely could not mortify you. I shall see you to-morrow, however early you may depart, as I cannot let your dear sister leave Paris without my embracing her.

'Your faithful friend,

'Berengaria.'

CHAPTER LXXVI.

In old days, it was the habit to think and say that the House of Commons was an essentially 'queer place,' which no one could understand until he was a member of it. It may, perhaps, be doubted whether that somewhat mysterious quality still altogether attaches to that assembly. 'Our own Reporter' has invaded it in all its purlieus. No longer content with giving an account of the speeches of its members, he is not satisfied unless he describes their persons, their dress, and their characteristic mannerisms. He tells us how they dine, even the wines and dishes which they favour, and follows them into the very mysteries of their smoking-room. And yet there is perhaps a certain fine sense of the feelings, and opinions, and humours of this assembly, which cannot be acquired by hasty notions and necessarily superficial remarks, but must be the result of long and patient observation, and of that quick sympathy with human sentiment, in all its classes, which is involved in the possession of that inestimable quality styled tact.

When Endymion Ferrars first took his seat in the House of Commons, it still fully possessed its character of enigmatic tradition. It had been thought that this, in a great degree, would have been dissipated by the Reform Act of 1832, which suddenly introduced into the hallowed precinct a number of individuals whose education, manners, modes of thought, were different from those of the previous inhabitants, and in some instances, and in some respects, quite contrary to them. But this was not so. After a short time it was observed that the old material, though at first much less in quantity, had leavened the new mass; that the tone of the former House was imitated and adopted, and that at the end of five years, about the time Endymion was returned to Parliament, much of its serene, and refined, and even classical character had been recovered.

For himself, he entered the chamber with a certain degree of awe, which, with use, diminished, but never entirely disappeared. The scene was one over which his boyhood even had long mused, and it was associated with all those traditions of genius, elo-

quence, and power that charm and inspire youth. His practical acquaintance with the forms and habits of the House from his customary attendance on their debates as private secretary to a cabinet minister, was of great advantage to him, and restrained that excitement which dangerously accompanies us when we enter into a new life, and especially a life of such deep and thrilling interests and such large proportions. This result was also assisted by his knowledge, at least by sight, of a large proportion of the old members, and by his personal and sometimes intimate acquaintance with those of his own party. There was much in his position, therefore, to soften that awkward feeling of being a freshman, which is always embarrassing.

He took his place on the second bench of the opposition side of the House, and nearly behind Lord Roehampton. Mr. Bertie Tremaine, whom Endymion encountered in the lobby as he was escaping to dinner, highly disapproved of this step. He had greeted Endymion with affable condescension. 'You made your first mistake to-night, my dear Ferrars. You should have taken your seat below the gangway and near me, on the Mountain. You, like myself, are a man of the future.'

'I am a member of the opposition. I do not suppose it signifies much where I sit.'

'On the contrary, it signifies everything. After this great Tory reaction there is nothing to be done now by speeches, and, in all probability, very little that can be effectually opposed. Much, therefore, depends upon where you sit. If you sit on the Mountain, the public imagination will be attracted to you, and when they are aggrieved, which they will be in good time, the public passion, which is called opinion, will look to you for representation. My advice to my friends now is to sit together and say nothing, but to profess through the press the most advanced opinions. We sit on the back bench of the gangway, and we call ourselves the Mountain.'

Notwithstanding Mr. Bertie Tremaine's oracular revelations, Endymion was very glad to find his old friend Trenchard generally his neighbour. He had a high opinion both of Trenchard's judgment and acquirements, and he liked the man. In time they always managed to sit together. Job Thornberry took his

seat below the gangway, on the opposition side, and on the floor of the House. Mr. Bertie Tremaine had sent his brother, Mr. Tremaine Bertie, to look after this new star, who he was anxious should ascend the Mountain; but Job Thornberry wishing to know whether the Mountain were going for 'total and immediate,' and not obtaining a sufficiently distinct reply, declined the proffered intimation. Mr. Bertie Tremaine, being a landed proprietor as well as leader of the Mountain, was too much devoted to the rights of labour to sanction such middle-class madness.

'Peel will have to do it,' said Job. 'You will see.'

'Peel now occupies the position of Necker,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'and will make the same *fiasco*. Then you will at last have a popular government.'

'And the rights of labour?' asked Job. 'All I hope is, I may have got safe to the States before that day.'

'There will be no danger,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'There is this difference between the English Mountain and the French. The English Mountain has its government prepared. And my brother spoke to you because, when the hour arrives, I wished to see you a member of it.'

'My dear Endymion,' said Waldershare, 'let us dine together before we meet in mortal conflict, which I suppose will be soon. I really think your Mr. Bertie Tremaine the most absurd being out of Colney Hatch.'

'Well, he has a purpose,' said Endymion; 'and they say that a man with a purpose generally sees it realised.'

'What I do like in him,' said Waldershare, 'is this revival of the Pythagorean system, and leading a party of silence. That is rich.'

One of the most interesting members of the House of Commons was Sir Fraunceys Scrope. He was the father of the House, though it was difficult to believe that from his appearance. He was tall, and had kept his distinguished figure; a handsome man, with a musical voice, and a countenance now benignant, though very bright, and once haughty. He still retained the same fashion of costume in which he had ridden up to Westminster more than half a century ago, from his seat in Derby-

shire, to support his dear friend Charles Fox; real top-boots, and a blue coat and buff waistcoat. He was a great friend of Lord Roehampton, had a large estate in the same county, and had refused an earldom. Knowing Endymion, he came and sate by him one day in the House, and asked him, good-naturedly, how he liked his new life.

'It is very different from what it was when I was your age. Up to Easter we rarely had a regular debate, never a party division; very few people came up indeed. But there was a good deal of speaking on all subjects before dinner. We had the privilege then of speaking on the presentation of petitions at any length, and we seldom spoke on any other occasion. After Easter there was always at least one great party fight. This was a mighty affair, talked of for weeks before it came off, and then rarely an adjourned debate. We were gentlemen, used to sit up late, and should have been sitting up somewhere else had we not been in the House of Commons. After this party fight, the House for the rest of the session was a mere club.'

'There was not much business doing then,' said Endymion.

'There was not much business in the country then. The House of Commons was very much like what the House of Lords is now. You went home to dine, and now and then came back for an important division.'

'But you must always have had the estimates here,' said Endymion.

'Yes, but they ran through very easily. Hume was the first man who attacked the estimates. What are you going to do with yourself to-day? Will you take your mutton with me? You must come in boots, for it is now dinner-time, and you must return, I fancy. Twenty years ago, no man would think of coming down to the House except in evening dress. I remember so late as Mr. Canning, the minister always came down in silk stockings and pantaloons, or knee breeches. All things change, and quoting Virgil, as that young gentleman has just done, will be the next thing to disappear. In the last parliament we often had Latin quotations, but never from a member with a new constituency. I have heard Greek quoted here, but that was long ago, and a great mistake. The House was quite alarmed.

Charles Fox used to say as to quotation—"No Greek; as much Latin as you like; and never French under any circumstances. No English poet unless he had completed his century." These were like some other good rules, the unwritten orders of the House of Commons.'

CHAPTER LXXVII.

WHILE parliaments were dissolving and ministries forming, the disappointed seeking consolation and the successful enjoying their triumph, Simon, Earl of Montfort, who just missed being a great philosopher, was reading 'Topsy Turvy,' which infinitely amused him; the style so picturesque and lambent! the tone so divertingly cynical! And if the knowledge of society in its pages was not so distinguished as that of human nature generally, this was a deficiency obvious only to a comparatively limited circle of its readers.

Lord Montfort had reminded Endymion of his promise to introduce the distinguished author to him, and accordingly, after due researches as to his dwelling-place, Mr. Ferrars called in Jermyn Street and sent up his card, to know whether Mr. St. Barbe would receive him. This was evidently not a matter-of-course affair, and some little time had elapsed when the maid-servant reappeared, and beckoned to Endymion to follow her upstairs.

In the front drawing-room of the first floor, robed in a flaming dressing-gown, and standing with his back to the fire and to the looking-glass, the frame of which was encrusted with cards of invitation, the former colleague of Endymion received his visitor with a somewhat haughty and reserved air.

'Well, I am delighted to see you again,' said Endymion.

No reply but a ceremonious bow.

'And to congratulate you,' Endymion added after a moment's pause. 'I hear of nothing but of your book; I suppose one of the most successful that have appeared for a long time.'

'Its success is not owing to your friends,' said Mr. St. Barbe tartly.

'My friends!' said Endymion; 'what could they have done to prevent it?'

'They need not have dissolved parliament,' said Mr. St. Barbe with irritation. 'It was nearly fatal to me; it would have been to anybody else. I was selling forty thousand a month; I believe more than Gushy ever reached; and so they dissolved parliament. The sale went down half at once—and now you expect me to support your party!'

'Well, it was unfortunate, but the dissolution could hardly have done you any permanent injury, and you could scarcely expect that such an event could be postponed even for the advantage of an individual so distinguished as yourself.'

'Perhaps not,' said St. Barbe, apparently a little mollified, 'but they might have done something to show their regret at it.'

'Something!' said Endymion, 'what sort of thing?'

'The prime minister might have called on me, or at least have written to me a letter. I want none of their honours; I have scores of letters every day, suggesting that some high distinction should be conferred on me. I believe the nation expects me to be made a baronet. By the by, I heard the other day you had got into parliament. I know nothing of these matters; they do not interest me. Is it the fact?'

'Well, I was so fortunate, and there are others of your old friends, Trenchard, for example.'

'You do not mean to say that Trenchard is in parliament!' said St. Barbe, throwing off all his affected reserve. 'Well, it is too disgusting! Trenchard in parliament, and I obliged to think it a great favour if a man gives me a frank! Well, representative institutions have seen their day. That is something.'

'I have come here on a social mission,' said Endymion in a soothing tone. 'There is a great admirer of yours who much wishes to make your acquaintance. Trusting to our old intimacy, of which of course I am very proud, it was even hoped that you might waive ceremony, and come and dine.'

'Quite impossible!' exclaimed St. Barbe, and turning round,

he pointed to the legion of invitations before him. 'You see, the world is at my feet. I remember that fellow Seymour Hicks taking me to his rooms to show me a card he had from a countess. What would he say to this?'

'Well, but you cannot be engaged to dinner every day,' said Endymion; 'and you really may choose any day you like.'

'Well, there are not many dinners among them, to be sure,' said St. Barbe. 'Small and earlies. How I hate a "small and early"! Shown into a room where you meet a select few who have been asked to dinner, and who are chewing the cud like a herd of kine, and you are expected to tumble before them to assist their digestion! Faugh! No, sir; we only dine out now, and we think twice, I can tell you, before we accept even an invitation to dinner. Who's your friend?'

'Well, my friend is Lord Montfort."

'You do not mean to say that! And he is an admirer of mine?'

'An enthusiastic admirer.'

'I will dine with Lord Montfort. There is no one who appreciates so completely and so highly the old nobility of England as myself. They are a real aristocracy. None of the pinchbeck pedigrees and ormolu titles of the continent. Lord Montfort is, I think, an earl. A splendid title, earl! an English earl; count goes for nothing. The Earl of Montfort! An enthusiastic admirer of mine! The aristocracy of England, especially the old aristocracy, are highly cultivated. Sympathy from such a class is to be valued. I care for no other—I have always despised the million of vulgar. They have come to me, not I to them, and I have always told them the truth about themselves, that they are a race of snobs, and they rather like being told so. And now for your day?'

'Why not this day if you be free? I will call for you about eight, and take you in my brougham to Montfort House.'

'You have got a brougham! Well, I suppose so, being a member of parliament, though I know a good many members of parliament who have not got broughams. But your family, I remember, married into the swells. I do not grudge it you. You were always a good comrade to me. I never knew a man

more free from envy than you, Ferrars, and envy is an odious vice. There are people I know, who, when they hear I have dined with the Earl of Montfort, will invent all sorts of stories against me, and send them to what they call the journals of society.'

'Well, then, it shall be to-day,' said Endymion, rising.

'It shall be to-day, and to tell you the truth, I was thinking this morning where I should dine to-day. What I miss here are the cafés. Now in Paris you can dine every day exactly as it suits your means and mood. You may dine for a couple of francs in a quiet, unknown street, and very well; or you may dine for a couple of napoleons in a flaming saloon, with windows opening on a crowded boulevard. London is deficient in dining capability.'

'You should belong to a club. Do you not?'

'So I was told by a friend of mind the other day,—one of your great swells. He said I ought to belong to the Athenæum, and he would propose me, and the committee would elect me as a matter of course. They rejected me and selected a bishop. And then people are surprised that the Church is in danger!'

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

The condition of England at the meeting of Parliament in 1842 was not satisfactory. The depression of trade in the manufacturing districts seemed overwhelming, and continued increasing during the whole of the year. A memorial from Stockport to the Queen in the spring represented that more than half the master spinners had failed, and that no less than three thousand dwelling-houses were untenanted. One-fifth of the population of Leeds were dependent on the poor-rates. The state of Sheffield was not less severe—and the blast furnaces of Wolverhampton were extinguished. There were almost daily meetings, at Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds, to consider the great and increasing distress of the country, and to induce ministers to bring forward remedial measures; but as these were impossible,

violence was soon substituted for passionate appeals to the fears or the humanity of the government. Vast bodies of the population assembled in Staleybridge, and Ashton, and Oldham, and marched into Manchester.

For a week the rioting was unchecked, but the government despatched a strong military force to that city, and order was restored.

The state of affairs in Scotland was not more favourable. There were food riots in several of the Scotch towns, and in Glasgow the multitude assembled, and then commenced what they called a begging tour, but which was really a progress of not disguised intimidation. The economic crisis in Ireland was yet to come, but the whole of that country was absorbed in a harassing and dangerous agitation for the repeal of the union between the two countries.

During all this time, the Anti-Corn-Law League was holding regular and frequent meetings at Manchester, at which statements were made distinguished by great eloquence and little scruple. But the able leaders of this confederacy never succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of the great body of the population. Between the masters and the workmen there was an alienation of feeling, which apparently never could be removed. This reserve, however, did not enlist the working classes on the side of the government; they had their own object, and one which they themselves enthusiastically cherished. And this was the Charter, a political settlement which was to restore the golden age, and which the master manufacturers and the middle classes generally looked upon with even more apprehension than Her Majesty's advisers. It is hardly necessary to add, that in a state of affairs like that which is here faintly but still faithfully sketched, the rapid diminution of the revenue was inevitable, and of course that decline mainly occurred in the two all-important branches of the customs and excise.

There was another great misfortune also which at this trying time hung over England. The country was dejected. The humiliating disasters of Afghanistan, dark narratives of which were periodically arriving, had produced a more depressing effect on the spirit of the country than all the victories and menaces

of Napoleon in the heyday of his wild career. At home and abroad, there seemed nothing to sustain the national spirit; financial embarrassment, commercial and manufacturing distress, social and political agitation on the one hand, and on the other, the loss of armies, of reputation, perhaps of empire. It was true that these external misfortunes could hardly be attributed to the new ministry—but when a nation is thoroughly perplexed and dispirited, it soon ceases to make distinctions between political parties. The country is out of sorts, and the 'government' is held answerable for the disorder.

Thus it will be seen, that, though the new ministry were supported by a commanding majority in parliament, and that, too, after a recent appeal to the country, they were not popular; it may be truly said they were even the reverse. The opposition, on the contrary, notwithstanding their discomfiture, and, on some subjects, their disgrace, were by no means disheartened, and believed that there were economical causes at work, which must soon restore them to power.

The minister brought forward his revision of the tariff, which was denounced by the League as futile, and in which anathema the opposition soon found it convenient to agree. Had the minister included in his measure that 'total and immediate repeal' of the existing corn laws which was preached by many as a panacea, the effect would have been probably much the same. No doubt a tariff may aggravate, or may mitigate, such a condition of commercial depression as periodically visits a state of society like that of England, but it does not produce it. It was produced in 1842, as it had been produced at the present time, by an abuse of capital and credit, and by a degree of production which the wants of the world have not warranted.

And yet all this time, there were certain influences at work in the great body of the nation, neither foreseen, nor for some time recognised, by statesmen and those great capitalists on whose opinion statesmen much depend, which were stirring, as it were, like the unconscious power of the forces of nature, and which were destined to baffle all the calculations of persons in authority and the leading spirits of all parties, strengthen

a perplexed administration, confound a sanguine opposition, render all the rhetoric, statistics, and subscriptions of the Anti-Corn-Law League fruitless, and absolutely make the Chartists forget the Charter.

'My friends will not assist themselves by resisting the government measures,' said Mr. Neuchatel, with his usual calm smile, half sceptical, half sympathetic. 'The measures will do no good, but they will do no harm. There are no measures that will do any good at this moment. We do not want measures; what we want is a new channel.'

That is exactly what was wanted. There was abundant capital in the country and a mass of unemployed labour. But the markets on which they had of late depended, the American especially, were overworked and overstocked, and in some instances were not only overstocked, but disturbed by war, as the Chinese, for example—and capital and labour wanted 'a new channel.'

The new channel came, and all the persons of authority, alike political and commercial, seemed quite surprised that it had arrived; but when a thing or a man is wanted, they generally appear. One or two lines of railway, which had been long sleepily in formation, about this time were finished, and one or two lines of railway, which had been finished for some time and were unnoticed, announced dividends, and not contemptible ones. Suddenly there was a general feeling in the country, that its capital should be invested in railways; that the whole surface of the land should be transformed, and covered, as by a network, with these mighty means of communication. When the passions of the English, naturally an enthusiastic people, are excited on a subject of finance, their will, their determination, and resource, are irresistible. This was signally proved in the present instance, for they never ceased subscribing their capital until the sum entrusted to this new form of investment reached an amount almost equal to the national debt; and this too in a very few years. The immediate effect on the condition of the country was absolutely prodigious. The value of land rose, all the blast furnaces were relit, a stimulant was given to every branch of the home trade, the amount suddenly paid in

wages exceeded that ever known in this country, and wages too at a high rate. Large portions of the labouring classes not only enjoyed comfort, but commanded luxury. All this of course soon acted on the revenue, and both customs and especially excise soon furnished an ample surplus.

It cannot be pretended that all this energy and enterprise were free in their operation from those evils which, it seems, must inevitably attend any extensive public speculation, however well founded. Many of the scenes and circumstances recalled the days of the South Sea Scheme. The gambling in shares of companies which were formed only in name was without limit. The principal towns of the north established for that purpose stock exchanges of their own, and Leeds especially, one-fifth of whose population had been authoritatively described in the first session of the new parliament as dependent on the poor-rates, now boasted of a stock exchange which in the extent of its transactions rivalled that of the metropolis. And the gambling was universal, from the noble to the mechanic. It was confined to no class and to no sex. The scene which took place at the Board of Trade on the last day on which plans could be lodged, and when midnight had arrived while crowds from the country were still filling the hall, and pressing at the doors, deserved and required for its adequate representation the genius of a Hogarth. This was the day on which it was announced that the total number of railway projects, on which deposits had been paid, had reached nearly to eight hundred.

What is remarkable in this vast movement in which so many millions were produced, and so many more promised, is, that the great leaders of the financial world took no part in it. The mighty loan-mongers, on whose fiat the fate of kings and empires sometimes depended, seemed like men who, witnessing some eccentricity of nature, watch it with mixed feelings of curiosity and alarm. Even Lombard Street, which never was more wanted, was inactive, and it was only by the irresistible pressure of circumstances that a banking firm which had an extensive country connection was ultimately forced to take the leading part that was required, and almost unconsciously lay the foundation of the vast fortunes which it has realised, and

organise the varied connection which it now commands. All seemed to come from the provinces, and from unknown people in the provinces.

But in all affairs there must be a leader, and a leader appeared. He was more remarkable than the movement itself. He was a London tradesman, though a member of parliament returned for the first time to this House of Commons. This leader was Mr. Vigo.

Mr. Vigo had foreseen what was coming, and had prepared for it. He agreed with Mr. Neuchatel, what was wanted was 'a new channel.' That channel he thought he had discovered, and he awaited it. He himself could command no inconsiderable amount of capital, and he had a following of obscure rich friends who believed in him, and did what he liked. His daily visits to the City, except when he was travelling over England, and especially the north and midland counties, had their purpose and bore fruit. He was a director, and soon the chairman and leading spirit, of a railway which was destined to be perhaps our most important one. He was master of all the details of the business; he had arrived at conclusions on the question of the gauges, which then was a *pons asinorum* for the multitude, and understood all about rolling stock and permanent ways, and sleepers and branch lines, which were then cabalistic terms to the general. In his first session in parliament he had passed quietly and almost unnoticed several bills on these matters, and began to be recognised by the Committee of Selection as a member who ought to be 'put on' for questions of this kind.

The great occasion had arrived, and Mr. Vigo was equal to it. He was one of those few men who awake one day and find themselves famous. Suddenly it would seem that the name of Mr. Vigo was in everybody's mouth. There was only one subject which interested the country, and he was recognised as the man who best understood it. He was an oracle, and, naturally, soon became an idol. The tariff of the ministers was forgotten, the invectives of the League were disregarded, their motions for the repeal of the corn laws were invariably defeated by large and contemptuous majorities. The House of Commons did nothing but pass railway bills, measures which were welcomed

with unanimity by the House of Lords, whose estates were in consequence daily increasing in value. People went to the gallery to see Mr. Vigo introduce bills, and could scarcely restrain their enthusiasm at the spectacle of so much patriotic energy, which secured for them premiums for shares, which they held in undertakings of which the first sod was not yet cut. On one morning, the Great Cloudland Company, of which he was chairman, gave their approval of twenty-six bills, which he immediately introduced into parliament. Next day, the Ebor and North Cloudland sanctioned six bills under his advice, and affirmed deeds and agreements which affected all the principal railway projects in Lancashire and Yorkshire. A quarter of an hour later, just time to hurry from one meeting to another, where he was always received with rampant enthusiasm, Newcastle and the extreme north accepted his dictatorship. During a portion of two days, he obtained the consent of shareholders to forty bills, involving an expenditure of ten millions; and the engagements for one session alone amounted to one hundred and thirty millions sterling.

Mr. Neuchatel shrugged his shoulders, but no one would listen even to Mr. Neuchatel, when the prime minister himself, supposed to be the most wary of men, and especially on financial subjects, in the very white heat of all this speculation, himself raised the first sod on his own estate in a project of extent and importance.

Throughout these extraordinary scenes, Mr. Vigo, though not free from excitement, exhibited, on the whole, much self-control. He was faithful to his old friends, and no one profited more in this respect than Mr. Rodney. That gentleman became the director of several lines, and vice-chairman of one over which Mr. Vigo himself presided. No one was surprised that Mr. Rodney therefore should enter parliament. He came in by virtue of one of those petitions that Tadpole was always cooking or baffling. Mr. Rodney was a supporter of the ministry, and Mr. Vigo was a Liberal, but Mr. Vigo returned Mr. Rodney to parliament all the same, and no one seemed astonished or complained. Political connection, political consistency, political principle, all vanished before the fascination of premiums.

As for Endymion, the great man made him friendly and earnest overtures, and offered, if he would give his time to business, which, as he was in opposition, would be no great sacrifice, to promote and secure his fortune. But Endymion, after due reflection, declined, though with gratitude, these tempting proposals. Ferrars was an ambitious man, but not too imaginative a one. He had a main object in life, and that was to regain the position which had been forfeited, not by his own fault. His grandfather and his father had both been privy councillors and ministers of state. There had, indeed, been more than the prospect of his father filling a very prominent position. All had been lost, but the secret purpose of the life of Endymion was that, from being a clerk in a public office, he should arrive by his own energies at the station to which he seemed, as it were, born. To accomplish this he felt that the entire devotion of his labour and thought was requisite. His character was essentially tenacious, and he had already realised no inconsiderable amount of political knowledge and official experience. His object seemed difficult and distant, but there was nothing wild or visionary in its pursuit. He had achieved some of the first steps, and he was yet very young. There were friends about him, however, who were not content with what they deemed his moderate ambition, and thought they discerned in him qualities which might enable him to mount to a higher stage. However this might be, his judgment was that he must resist the offers of Mr. Vigo, though they were sincerely kind, and so he felt them.

In the meantime, he frequently met that gentleman, and not merely in the House of Commons. Mr. St. Barbe would have been frantically envious could he have witnessed and perused the social invitations that fell like a continuous snow-storm on the favoured roof of Mr. Vigo. Mr. Vigo was not a party question. He dined with high patricians who forgot their political differences, while they agreed in courting the presence of this great benefactor of his country. The fine ladies were as eager in their homage to this real patriot, and he might be seen between rival countesses, who emulated each other in their appreciation of his public services. These were Mr. Vigo's

dangerous suitors. He confessed to Endymion one day that he could not manage the great ladies. 'Male swells,' he would say laughingly, 'I have measured physically and intellectually.' The golden youth of the country seemed indeed fascinated by his society, repeated his sententious bons-mots, and applied for shares in every company which he launched into prosperous existence.

Mr. Vigo purchased a splendid mansion in St. James' Square, where invitations to his banquets were looked upon almost as commands. His chief cook was one of the celebrities of Europe, and though he had served emperors, the salary he received from Mr. Vigo exceeded any one he had hitherto condescended to pocket. Mr. Vigo bought estates, hired moors, lavished his money, not only with profusion, but with generosity. Everything was placed at his command, and it appeared that there was nothing that he refused. 'When this excitement is over,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'I hope to induce him to take India.'

In the midst of this commanding effulgence, the calmer beam of Mr. Rodney might naturally pass unnoticed, yet its brightness was clear and sustained. The Rodneys engaged a dwelling of no mean proportion in that favoured district of South Kensington, which was then beginning to assume the high character it has since obtained. Their equipages were distinguished, and when Mrs. Rodney entered the Park, driving her matchless ponies, and attended by outriders, and herself bright as Diana, the world leaning over its palings witnessed her appearance with equal delight and admiration.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

We have rather anticipated, for the sake of the subject, in our last chapter, and we must now recur to the time when, after his return from Paris, Endymion entered into what was virtually his first session in the House of Commons. Though in opposi-

tion, and with all the delights of the most charming society at his command, he was an habitual and constant attendant. One might have been tempted to believe that he would turn out to be, though a working, only a silent member, but his silence was only prudence. He was deeply interested and amused in watching the proceedings, especially when those took part in them with whom he was acquainted. Job Thornberry occupied a leading position in the debates. He addressed the House very shortly after he took his seat, and having a purpose and a most earnest one, and being what is styled a representative man of his subject, the House listened to him at once, and his place in debate was immediately recognised. The times favoured him, especially during the first and second session, while the commercial depression lasted; afterwards, he was always listened to, because he had great oratorical gifts, a persuasive style that was winning, and, though he had no inconsiderable powers of sarcasm, his extreme tact wisely guided him to restrain for the present that dangerous, though most effective, weapon.

The Pythagorean school, as Waldershare styled Mr. Bertie Tremaine and his following, very much amused Endymion. The heaven-born minister air of the great leader was striking. He never smiled, or at any rate contemptuously. Notice of a question was sometimes publicly given from this bench, but so abtruse in its nature and so quaint in its expression, that the House never comprehended it, and the unfortunate minister who had to answer, even with twenty-four hours' study, was obliged to commence his reply by a conjectural interpretation of the query formally addressed to him. But though they were silent in the House, their views were otherwise powerfully represented. The weekly journal devoted to their principles was sedulously circulated among members of the House. It was called the 'Precursor,' and systematically attacked not only every institution, but, it might be said, every law, and all the manners and customs, of the country. Its style was remarkable, never excited or impassioned, but frigid, logical, and incisive, and suggesting appalling revolutions with the calmness with which one would narrate the ordinary incidents of life. The editor of the 'Precursor' was Mr. Jawett, selected by that

great master of human nature, Mr. Bertie Tremaine. When it got about, that the editor of this fearful journal was a clerk in a public office, the indignation of the government, or at least of their supporters, was extreme, and there was no end to the punishments and disgrace to which he was to be subjected; but Waldershare, who lived a good deal in Bohemia, was essentially cosmopolitan, and dabbled in letters, persuaded his colleagues not to make the editor of the 'Precursor' a martyr, and undertook with their authority to counteract his evil purposes by literary means alone.

Being fully empowered to take all necessary steps for this object, Waldershare thought that there was no better mode of arresting public attention to his enterprise than by engaging for its manager the most renowned pen of the hour, and he opened himself on the subject in the most sacred confidence to Mr. St. Barbe. That gentleman, invited to call upon a minister, sworn to secrecy, and brimful of state secrets, could not long restrain himself, and with admirable discretion consulted on his views and prospects Mr. Endymion Ferrars.

'But I thought you were one of us,' said Endymion; 'you asked me to put you in the way of getting into Brooks'!'

'What of that?' said Mr. St. Barbe; 'and when you remember what the Whigs owe to literary men, they ought to have elected me into Brooks' without my asking for it.'

'Still, if you be on the other side?'

'It is nothing to do with sides,' said Mr. St. Barbe; 'this affair goes far beyond sides. The "Precursor" wants to put down the Crown; I shall put down the "Precursor." It is an affair of the closet, not of sides—an affair of the royal closet, sir. I am acting for the Crown, sir; the Crown has appealed to me. I save the Crown, and there must be personal relations with the highest,' and he looked quite fierce.

'Well, you have not written your first article yet,' said Endymion. 'I shall look forward to it with much interest.'

After Easter, Lord Roehampton said to Endymion that a question ought to be put on a subject of foreign policy of importance, and on which he thought the ministry were in difficulties; 'and I think you might as well ask it, Endymion. I

will draw up the question, and you will give notice of it. It will be a reconnaissance.'

The notice of this question was the first time Endymion opened his mouth in the House of Commons. It was an humble and not a very hazardous office, but when he got on his legs his head swam, his heart beat so violently, that it was like a convulsion preceding death, and though he was only on his legs for a few seconds, all the sorrows of his life seemed to pass before him. When he sate down, he was quite surprised that the business of the House proceeded as usual, and it was only after some time that he became convinced that no one but himself was conscious of his sufferings, or that he had performed a routine duty otherwise than in a routine manner.

The crafty question, however, led to some important consequences. When asked, to the surprise of every one the minister himself replied to it. Waldershare, with whom Endymion dined at Bellamy's that day, was in no good humour in consequence.

When Lord Roehampton had considered the ministerial reply, he said to Endymion, 'This must be followed up. You must move for papers. It will be a good opportunity for you, for the House is up to something being in the wind, and they will listen. It will be curious to see whether the minister follows you. If so, he will give me an opening.'

Endymion felt that this was the crisis of his life. He knew the subject well, and he had all the tact and experience of Lord Roehampton to guide him in his statement and his arguments. He had also the great feeling that, if necessary, a powerful arm would support him. It was about a week before the day arrived, and Endymion slept very little that week, and the night before his motion not a wink. He almost wished he was dead as he walked down to the House in the hope that the exercise might remedy, or improve, his languid circulation; but in vain, and when his name was called and he had to rise, his hands and feet were like ice.

Lady Roehampton and Lady Montfort were both in the ventilator, and he knew it.

It might be said that he was sustained by his utter despair.

He felt so feeble and generally imbecile, that he had not vitality enough to be sensible of failure.

He had a kind audience, and an interested one. When he opened his mouth, he forgot his first sentence, which he had long prepared. In trying to recall it and failing, he was for a moment confused. But it was only for a moment; the unpremeditated came to his aid, and his voice, at first tremulous, was recognised as distinct and rich. There was a murmur of sympathy, and not merely from his own side. Suddenly, both physically and intellectually, he was quite himself. His arrested circulation flowed, and fed his stagnant brain. His statement was lucid, his arguments were difficult to encounter, and his manner was modest. He sate down amid general applause, and though he was then conscious that he had omitted more than one point on which he had relied, he was on the whole satisfied, and recollected that he might use them in reply, a privilege to which he now looked forward with feelings of comfort and confidence.

The minister again followed him, and in an elaborate speech. The subject evidently, in the opinion of the minister, was of too delicate and difficult a character to trust to a subordinate. Overwhelmed as he was with the labours of his own department, the general conduct of affairs, and the leadership of the House, he still would undertake the representation of an office with whose business he was not familiar. Wary and accurate he always was, but in discussions on foreign affairs, he never exhibited the unrivalled facility with which he ever treated a commercial or financial question, or that plausible promptness with which, at a moment's notice, he could encounter any difficulty connected with domestic administration.

All these were qualities which Lord Roehampton possessed with reference to the affairs over which he had long presided, and in the present instance, following the minister, he was particularly happy. He had a good case, and he was gratified by the success of Endymion. He complimented him and confuted his opponent, and, not satisfied with demolishing his arguments, Lord Rochampton indulged in a little raillery which the House

enjoyed, but which was never pleasing to the more solemn organisation of his rival.

No language can describe the fury of Waldershare as to the events of this evening. He looked upon the conduct of the minister, in not permitting him to represent his department, as a decree of the incapacity of his subordinate, and of the virtual termination of the official career of the Under-Secretary of State. He would have resigned the next day had it not been for the influence of Lady Beaumaris, who soothed him by suggesting, that it would be better to take an early opportunity of changing his present post for another.

The minister was wrong. He was not fond of trusting youth, but it is a confidence which should be exercised, particularly in the conduct of a popular assembly. If the under-secretary had not satisfactorily answered Endymion, which no one had a right to assume, for Waldershare was a brilliant man, the minister could have always advanced to the rescue at the fitting time. As it was, he made a personal enemy of one who naturally might have ripened into a devoted follower, and who from his social influence, as well as from his political talents, was no despicable foe.

CHAPTER LXXX.

Notwithstanding the great political, and consequently social, changes that had taken place, no very considerable alteration occurred in the general life of those chief personages in whose existence we have attempted to interest the reader. However vast may appear to be the world in which we move, we all of us live in a limited circle. It is the result of circumstances; of our convenience and our taste. Lady Beaumaris became the acknowledged leader of Tory society, and her husband was so pleased with her position, and so proud of it, that he in a considerable degree sacrificed his own pursuits and pleasures for its maintenance. He even refused the mastership of a celebrated

hunt, which had once been an object of his highest ambition, that he might be early and always in London to support his wife in her receptions. Imogene herself was universally popular. Her gentle and natural manners, blended with a due degree of self-respect, her charming appearance, and her ready but unaffected sympathy, won every heart. Lady Roehampton was her frequent guest. Myra continued her duties as a leader of society, as her lord was anxious that the diplomatic world should not forget him. These were the two principal and rival houses. The efforts of Lady Montfort were more fitful, for they were to a certain degree dependent on the moods of her husband. It was observed that Lady Beaumaris never omitted attending the receptions of Lady Roehampton, and the tone of almost reverential affection with which she ever approached Myra was touching to those who were in the secret, but they were few.

No great change occurred in the position of Prince Florestan, except that in addition to the sports to which he was apparently devoted, he gradually began to interest himself in the turf. He had bred several horses of repute, and one, which he had named Lady Roehampton, was the favourite for a celebrated race. His highness was anxious that Myra should honour him by being his guest. This had never occurred before, because Lord Roehampton felt that so avowed an intimacy with a personage in the peculiar position of Prince Florestan was hardly becoming a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; but that he was no longer, and being the most good-natured man that ever lived, and easily managed in little things, he could not refuse Myra when she consulted him, as they call it, on the subject, and it was settled that Lord and Lady Roehampton were to dine with Prince Florestan. The prince was most anxious that Mr. Sidney Wilton should take this occasion of consenting to a reconciliation with him, and Lady Roehampton exerted herself much for this end. Mr. Sidney Wilton was in love with Lady Roehampton, and yet on this point he was inexorable. Lord and Lady Beaumaris went, and Lady Montfort, to whom the prince had addressed a private note of his own that quite captivated her, and Mr. and Mrs Neuchatel and Adriana. Waldershare,

Endymion, and Baron Sergius completed the guests, who were received by the Duke of St. Angelo and a couple of aides-de-camp. When the prince entered all rose, and the ladies curtseyed very low. Lord Roehampton resumed his seat immediately, saying to his neighbour, 'I rose to show my respect to my host; I sit down to show that I look upon him as a subject like myself.'

'A subject of whom?' inquired Lady Montfort.

'There is something in that,' said Lord Roehampton, smiling.

The Duke of St. Angelo was much disturbed by the conduct of Lord Roehampton, which had disappointed his calculations, and he went about lamenting that Lord Roehampton had a little gout.

They had assembled in the library and dined on the same floor. The prince was seated between Lady Montfort, whom he accompanied to dinner, and Lady Roehampton. Adriana fell to Endymion's lot. She looked very pretty, was beautifully dressed, and for her, was even gay. Her companion was in good spirits, and she seemed interested and amused. The prince never spoke much, but his remarks always told. He liked murmuring to women, but when requisite, he could throw a fly over the table with adroitness and effect. More than once during the dinner he whispered to Lady Roehampton: 'This is too kind—your coming here. But you have always been my best friend.' The dinner would have been lively and successful even if Waldershare had not been there, but he to-day was exuberant and irresistible. His chief topic was abuse of the government of which he was a member, and he lavished all his powers of invective and ridicule alike on the imbecility of their policy and their individual absurdities. All this much amused Lady Montfort, and gave Lord Roehampton an opportunity to fool the Under-Secretary of State to the top of his bent.

'If you do not take care,' said Mr. Neuchatel, 'they will turn you out.'

'I wish they would,' said Waldershare. 'That is what I am longing for. I should go then all over the country and address public meetings. It would be the greatest thing since Sacheverell.'

'Our people have not behaved well to Mr. Waldershare,' whispered Imogene to Lord Roehampton, 'but I think we shall put it all right.'

'Do you believe it?' inquired Lady Montfort of Lord Roehampton. He had been speaking to her for some little time in a hushed tone, and rather earnestly.

'Indeed I do; I cannot well see what there is to doubt about it. We know the father very well—an excellent man; he was the parish priest of Lady Roehampton before her marriage, when she lived in the country. And we know from him that more than a year ago something was contemplated. The son gave up his living then; he has remained at Rome ever since. And now I am told he returns to us, the Pope's legate and an archbishop *in partibus!*'

'It is most interesting,' said Lady Montfort. 'I was always his great admirer.'

'I know that; you and Lady Roehampton made me go and hear him. The father will be terribly distressed.'

'I do not care at all about the father,' said Lady Montfort; 'but the son had such a fine voice and was so very good-looking. I hope I shall see him.'

They were speaking of Nigel Penruddock, whose movements had been a matter of much mystery during the last two years. Rumours of his having been received into the Roman Church had been often rife; sometimes flatly, and in time faintly, contradicted. Now the facts seemed admitted, and it would appear that he was about to return to England not only as a Roman Catholic, but as a distinguished priest of the Church, and, it was said, even the representative of the Papacy.

All the guests rose at the same time—a pleasant habit—and went upstairs to the brilliantly lighted saloons. Lord Roehampton seated himself by Baron Sergius, with whom he was always glad to converse. 'We seem here quiet and content?' said the ex-minister inquiringly.

'I hope so, and I think so,' said Sergius. 'He believes in his star, and will leave everything to its influence. There are to be no more adventures.'

'It must be a great relief to Lord Roehampton to have got

quit of office,' said Mrs. Neuchatel to Lady Roehampton. 'I always pitied him so much. I never can understand why people voluntarily incur such labours and anxiety.'

'You should join us,' said Mr. Neuchatel to Waldershare. 'They would be very glad to see you at Brooks'.'

'Brooks' may join the October Club which I am going to revive,' said Waldershare.

'I never heard of that club,' said Mr. Neuchatel.

'It was a much more important thing than the Bill of Rights or the Act of Settlement,' said Waldershare, 'all the same.'

'I want to see his mother's portrait in the farther saloon,' said Lady Montfort to Myra.

'Let us go together.' And Lady Roehampton rose, and they went.

It was a portrait of Queen Agrippina by a master hand, and admirably illumined by reflected light, so that it seemed to live.

'She must have been very beautiful,' said Lady Montfort.

'Mr. Sidney Wilton was devotedly attached to her, my lord has told me,' said Lady Roehampton.

'So many were devotedly attached to her,' said Lady Montfort.

'Yes; she was like Mary of Scotland, whom some men are in love with even to this day. Her spell was irresistible. There are no such women now.'

'Yes; there is one,' said Lady Montfort, suddenly turning round and embracing Lady Roehampton; 'and I know she hates me, because she thinks I prevent her brother from marrying.'

'Dear Lady Montfort, how can you use such strong expressions? I am sure there can be only one feeling of Endymion's friends to you, and that is gratitude for your kindness to him.'

'I have done nothing for him; I can do nothing for him. I felt that when we were trying to get him into parliament. If he could marry, and be independent, and powerful, and rich, it would be better, perhaps, for all of us.'

'I wish he were independent, and powerful, and rich,' said Myra musingly. 'That would be a fairy tale. At present, he

must be content that he has some of the kindest friends in the world.'

'He interests me very much; no one so much. I am sincerely, even deeply, attached to him; but it is like your love, it is a sister's love. There is only one person I really love in the world, and alas! he does not love me!' And her voice was tremulous.

'Do not say such things, dear Lady Montfort. I never can believe what you sometimes intimate on that subject. Do you know, I think it a little hallucination.'

Lady Montfort shook her head with a truly mournful expression, and then suddenly, her beautiful face wreathed with smiles, she said in a gay voice, 'We will not think of such sorrows. I wish them to be entombed in my heart, but the spectres will rise sometimes. Now about your brother. I do not mean to say that it would not be a great loss to me if he married, but I wish him to marry if you do. For myself, I must have a male friend, and he must be very clever, and thoroughly understand politics. You know you deprived me of Lord Roehampton,' she continued smilingly, 'who was everything I could desire; and the Count of Ferroll would have suited me excellently, but then he ran away. Now Endymion could not easily run away, and he is so agreeable and so intelligent, that at last I thought I had found a companion worth helping—and I meant, and still mean, to work hard—until he is prime minister.'

'I have my dreams too about that,' said Lady Roehampton, 'but we are all about the same age, and can wait a little.'

'He cannot be minister too soon,' said Lady Montfort. 'It was not being minister soon that ruined Charles Fox.'

The party broke up. The prince made a sign to Waldershare, which meant a confidential cigar, and in a few minutes they were alone together.

'What women!' exclaimed the prince. 'Not to be rivalled in this city, and yet quite unlike each other.'

'And which do you admire most, sir?' said Waldershare.

The prince trimmed his cigar, and then he said, 'I will tell you this day five years.'

CHAPTER LXXXI.

The ecclesiastical incident mentioned at the dinner described in our last chapter, produced a considerable effect in what is called society. Nigel Penruddock had obtained great celebrity as a preacher, while his extreme doctrines and practices had alike amazed, fascinated, and alarmed a large portion of the public. For some time he had withdrawn from the popular gaze, but his individuality was too strong to be easily forgotten, even if occasional paragraphs as to his views and conduct, published, contradicted, and reiterated, were not sufficient to sustain, and even stimulate, curiosity. That he was about to return to his native land, as the Legate of His Holiness, was an event which made many men look grave, and some female hearts flutter.

The memory of Lady Roehampton could not escape from the past, and she could not recall it and all the scenes at Hurstley without emotion; and Lady Montfort remembered with some pride and excitement, that the Legate of the Pope had once been one of her heroes. It was evident that he had no wish to avoid his old acquaintances, for shortly after his arrival, and after he had assembled his suffragans, and instructed the clergy of his district, for dioceses did not then exist, Archbishop Penruddock, for so the Metropolitan of Tyre simply styled himself, called upon both these ladies.

His first visit was to Myra, and notwithstanding her disciplined self-control, her intense pride, and the deep and daring spirit which always secretly sustained her, she was nervous and agitated, but only in her boudoir. When she entered the saloon to welcome him, she seemed as calm as if she were going to an evening assembly.

Nigel was changed. Instead of that anxious and moody look which formerly marred the refined beauty of his countenance, his glance was calm and yet radiant. He was thinner, it might almost be said emaciated, which seemed to add height to his tall figure.

Lady Roehampton need not have been nervous about the

interview, and the pain of its inevitable associations. Except one allusion at the end of his visit, when his Grace mentioned some petty grievance, of which he wished to relieve his clergy, and said, 'I think I will consult your brother; being in the opposition, he will be less embarrassed than some of my friends in the government, or their supporters,' he never referred to the past. All he spoke of was the magnitude of his task, the immense but inspiring labours which awaited him, and his deep sense of his responsibility. Nothing but the Divine principle of the Church could sustain him. He was at one time hopeful that His Holiness might have thought the time ripe for the restoration of the national hierarchy, but it was decreed otherwise. Had it been accorded, no doubt it would have assisted him. A prelate *in partibus* is, in a certain sense, a stranger, whatever his duties, and the world is more willing when it is appealed to by one who has 'a local habitation and a name;' he is identified with the people among whom he lives. There was much to do. The state of the Catholic poor in his own district was heartrending. He never could have conceived such misery, and that too under the shadow of the Abbey. The few schools which existed were wretched, and his first attention must be given to this capital deficiency. He trusted much to female aid. He meant to invite the great Catholic ladies to unite with him in a common labour of love. In this great centre of civilisation, and wealth, and power, there was need of the spirit of a St. Ursula.

No one seemed more pleased by the return of Archbishop Penruddock than Lord Montfort. He appeared to be so deeply interested in his Grace's mission, sought his society so often, treated him with such profound respect, almost ceremony, asked so many questions about what was happening at Rome, and what was going to be done here—that Nigel might have been pardoned if he did not despair of ultimately inducing Lord Montfort to return to the faith of his illustrious ancestors. And yet, all this time, Lord Montfort was only amusing himself; a new character was to him a new toy, and when he could not find one, he would dip into the 'Memoirs of St. Simon.'

Instead of avoiding society, as was his wont in old days, the

Archbishop sought it. And there was nothing exclusive in his social habits; all classes and all creeds, all conditions and orders of men, were alike interesting to him; they were part of the mighty community, with all whose pursuits, and passions, and interests, and occupations he seemed to sympathise, but respecting which he had only one object—to bring them back once more to that imperial fold from which, in an hour of darkness and distraction, they had miserably wandered. The conversion of England was deeply engraven on the heart of Penruddock; it was his constant purpose, and his daily and nightly prayer.

So the Archbishop was seen everywhere, even at fashionable assemblies. He was a frequent guest at banquets which he never tasted, for he was a smiling ascetic, and though he seemed to be preaching or celebrating high mass in every part of the metropolis, organising schools, establishing convents, and building cathedrals, he could find time to move philanthropic resolutions at middle-class meetings, attend learned associations, and even occasionally send a paper to the Royal Society.

The person who fell most under the influence of the archbishop was Waldershare. He was fairly captivated by him. Nothing would satisfy Waldershare till he had brought the archbishop and Prince Florestan together. 'You are a Roman Catholic prince, sir,' he would say. 'It is absolute folly to forego such a source of influence and power as the Roman Catholic Church. Here is your man; a man made for the occasion, a man who may be pope. Come to an understanding with him, and I believe you will regain your throne in a year.'

'But, my dear Waldershare, it is very true I am a Roman Catholic, but I am also the head of the Liberal party in my country, and perhaps also on the continent of Europe, and they are not particularly affected to archbishops and popes.'

'Old-fashioned twaddle of the Liberal party,' exclaimed Waldershare. 'There is more true democracy in the Roman Catholic Church than in all the secret societies of Europe.'

'There is something in that,' said the prince musingly, 'and my friends are Roman Catholics, nominally Roman Catholics. If I were quite sure your man and the priests generally were nominally Roman Catholics, something might be done.'

'As for that,' said Waldershare, 'sensible men are all of the same religion.'

'And pray what is that?' inquired the prince.

'Sensible men never tell.'

Perhaps there was no family which suited him more, and where the archbishop became more intimate, than the Neuchatels. He very much valued a visit to Hainault, and the miscellaneous and influential circles he met there—merchant princes, and great powers of Lombard Street and the Stock Exchange. The Governor of the Bank happened to be a high churchman, and listened to the archbishop with evident relish. Mrs. Neuchatel also acknowledged the spell of his society, and he quite agreed with her that people should be neither so poor nor so rich. She had long mused over plans of social amelioration, and her new ally was to teach her how to carry them into practice. As for Mr. Neuchatel, he was pleased that his wife was amused, and liked the archbishop as he liked all clever men. 'You know,' he would say, 'I am in favour of all churches, provided, my lord archbishop, they do not do anything very foolish. Eh? So I shall subscribe to your schools with great pleasure. We cannot have too many schools, even if they only keep young people from doing mischief.'

CHAPTER LXXXII.

The prosperity of the country was so signal, while Mr. Vigo was unceasingly directing millions of our accumulated capital, and promises of still more, into the 'new channel,' that it seemed beyond belief that any change of administration could ever occur, at least in the experience of the existing generation. The minister to whose happy destiny it had fallen to gratify the large appetites and reckless consuming powers of a class now first known in our social hierarchy as 'Navvies,' was hailed as a second Pitt. The countenance of the opposition was habitually dejected, with the exception of those members of it on whom

Mr. Vigo graciously conferred shares, and Lady Montfort taunted Mr. Sidney Wilton with inquiries, why he and his friends had not made railroads, instead of inventing nonsense about cheap bread. Job Thornberry made wonderful speeches in favour of total and immediate repeal of the corn laws, and the Liberal party, while they cheered him, privately expressed their regret that such a capital speaker, who might be anything, was not a practical man. Low prices, abundant harvests, and a thriving commerce had rendered all appeals, varied even by the persuasive ingenuity of Thornberry, a wearisome iteration; and, though the League had transplanted itself from Manchester to the metropolis, and hired theatres for their rhetoric, the close of 1845 found them nearly reduced to silence.

Mr. Bertie Tremaine, who was always studying the spirit of the age, announced to the initiated that Mr. Vigo had something of the character and structure of Napoleon, and that he himself began to believe, that an insular nation, with such an enormous appetite, was not adapted to cosmopolitan principles, which were naturally of a character more spiritual and abstract. Mr. Bertie Tremaine asked Mr. Vigo to dinner, and introduced him to several distinguished youths of extreme opinions, who were dining off gold plate. Mr. Vigo was much flattered by his visit; his host made much of him; and he heard many things on the principles of government, and even of society, in the largest sense of the expression, which astonished and amused him. In the course of the evening he varied the conversation —one which became the classic library and the busts of the surrounding statesmen—by promising to most of the guests allotments of shares in a new company, not yet launched, but whose securities were already at a high premium.

Endymion, in the meantime, pursued the even tenor of his way. Guided by the experience, unrivalled knowledge, and consummate tact of Lord Roehampton, he habitually made inquiries, or brought forward motions, which were evidently inconvenient or embarrassing to the ministry; and the very circumstance, that he was almost always replied to by the prime minister, elevated him in the estimation of the House as much as the pertinence of his questions, and the accurate information

on which he founded his motions. He had not taken the House with a rush like Job Thornberry, but, at the end of three sessions, he was a personage universally looked upon as one who was 'certain to have office.'

There was another new member who had also made way, though slowly, and that was Mr. Trenchard; he had distinguished himself on a difficult committee, on which he had guided a perplexed minister, who was chairman, through many intricacies. Mr. Trenchard watched the operations of Mr. Vigo, with a calm, cold scrutiny, and ventured one day to impart his conviction to Endymion that there were breakers ahead. 'Vigo is exhausting the floating capital of the country,' he said, and he offered to Endymion to give him all the necessary details, if he would call the attention of the House to the matter. Endymion declined to do this, chiefly because he wished to devote himself to foreign affairs, and thought the House would hardly brook his interference also in finance. So he strongly advised Trenchard himself to undertake the task. Trenchard was modest, and a little timid about speaking; so it was settled that he should consult the leaders on the question, and particularly the gentleman who it was supposed would be their Chancellor of the Exchequer, if ever they were again called upon to form a ministry. This right honourable individual listened to Trenchard with the impatience which became a man of great experience addressed by a novice, and concluded the interview by saying, that he thought 'there was nothing in it;' at the same time, he would turn it in his mind, and consult some practical men. Accordingly the ex- and future minister consulted Mr. Vigo, who assured him that he was quite right; that 'there was nothing in it,' and that the floating capital of the country was inexhaustible.

In the midst of all this physical prosperity, one fine day in August, parliament having just been prorogued, an unknown dealer in potatoes wrote to the Secretary of State, and informed him that he had reason to think that a murrain had fallen over the whole of the potato crops in England, and that, if it extended to Ireland, the most serious consequences must ensue.

This mysterious but universal sickness of a single root changed the history of the world.

'There is no gambling like politics,' said Lord Roehampton, as he glanced at the 'Times,' at Princedown; 'four cabinets in one week; the government must be more sick than the potatoes.'

'Berengaria always says,' said Lord Montfort, 'that you should see Princedown in summer. I, on the contrary, maintain it is essentially a winter residence, for, if there ever be a sunbeam in England, Princedown always catches it. Now to-day, one might fancy one's self at Cannes.'

Lord Montfort was quite right, but even the most wilful and selfish of men was generally obliged to pass his Christmas at his northern castle. Montforts had passed their Christmas in that grim and mighty dwelling-place for centuries. Even he was not strong enough to contend against such tradition. Besides, every one loves power, even if they do not know what to do with it. There are such things as memberships for counties, which, if public feeling be not outraged, are hereditary, and adjacent boroughs, which, with a little management and much expense, become reasonable and loyal. If the flag were rarely to wave on the proud keep of Montfort, all these satisfactory circumstances would be greatly disturbed and baffled; and if the ancient ensign did not promise welcome and hospitality at Christmas, some of the principal uses even of Earls of Montfort might be questioned.

There was another reason, besides the distance and the clime, why Lord Montfort disliked the glorious pile which every Englishman envied him for possessing. The mighty domain of Montfort was an estate in strict settlement. Its lord could do nothing but enjoy its convenience and its beauty, and expend its revenues. Nothing could be sold or bought, not the slightest alteration—according to Lord Montfort—be made, without applying to trustees for their sanction. Lord Montfort spoke of this pitiable state of affairs as if he were describing the serfdom of the Middle Ages. 'If I were to pull this bell-rope, and it came down,' he would say, 'I should have to apply to the trustees before it could be arranged.'

Such a humiliating state of affairs had induced his lordship, on the very first occasion, to expend half a million of accumu-

lations, which were at his own disposal, in the purchase of Princedown, which certainly was a very different residence from Montfort Castle, alike in its clime and character.

Princedown was situate in a southern county, hardly on a southern coast, for it was ten miles from the sea, though enchanting views of the Channel were frequent and exquisite. It was a palace built in old days upon the Downs, but sheltered and screened from every hostile wind. The full warmth of the south fell upon the vast but fantastic pile of the Renaissance style, said to have been built by that gifted but mysterious individual, John of Padua. The gardens were wonderful, terrace upon terrace, and on each terrace a tall fountain. But the most peculiar feature was the park, which was undulating and extensive, but its timber entirely ilex: single trees of an age and size not common in that tree, and groups and clumps of ilex, but always ilex. Beyond the park, and extending far into the horizon, was Princedown forest, the dominion of the red deer.

The Roehamptons and Endymion were the only permanent visitors at Princedown at this moment, but every day brought guests who stayed eight-and-forty hours, and then flitted. Lady Montfort, like the manager of a theatre, took care that there should be a succession of novelties to please or to surprise the wayward audience for whom she had to cater. On the whole, Lord Montfort was, for him, in an extremely good humour; never very ill; Princedown was the only place where he never was very ill; he was a little excited, too, by the state of politics, though he did not exactly know why; 'though, I suppose,' he would say to Lord Roehampton, 'if you do come in again, there will be no more nonsense about O'Connell and all that sort of thing. If you are prudent on that head, and carry a moderate fixed duty, not too high, say ten shillings—that would satisfy everybody—I do not see why the thing might not go on as long as you liked.'

Mr. Waldershare came down, exuberant with endless combinations of persons and parties. He foresaw in all these changes that most providential consummation, the end of the middle class.

Mr. Waldershare had become quite a favourite with Lord Montfort, who delighted to talk with him about the Duke of Modena, and imbibe his original views of English History. 'Only,' Lord Montfort would observe, 'the Montforts have so much Church property, and I fancy the Duke of Modena would want us to disgorge.'

St. Barbe had been invited, and made his appearance. There had been a degree of estrangement between him and his patron. St. Barbe was very jealous; he was indeed jealous of everybody and everything, and of late there was a certain Doctor Comeley, an Oxford don of the new school, who had been introduced to Lord Montfort, and was initiating him in all the mysteries of Neology. This celebrated divine, who, in a sweet silky voice, quoted Socrates instead of St. Paul, and was opposed to all symbols and formulas as essentially unphilosophical, had become the hero of 'the little dinners' at Montfort House, where St. Barbe had been so long wont to shine, and who in consequence himself had become every day more severely orthodox.

'Perhaps we may meet to-day,' said Endymion one morning to St. Barbe in Pall Mall as they were separating. 'There is a little dinner at Montfort House.'

'Confound your little dinners!' exclaimed the indignant St. Barbe; 'I hope never to go to another little dinner, and especially at Montfort House. I do not want to be asked to dinner to tumble and play tricks to amuse my host. I want to be amused myself. One cannot be silent at these little dinners, and the consequence is, you say all the good things which are in your next number, and when it comes out, people say they have heard them before. No, sir, if Lord Montfort, or any other lord, wishes me to dine with him, let him ask me to a banquet of his own order, and where I may hold my tongue like the rest of his aristocratic guests.'

Mr Trenchard had come down and brought the news that the ministry had resigned, and that the Queen had sent for the leader of the opposition, who was in Scotland.

'I suppose we shall have to go to town,' said Lady Roehampton to her brother, in a room, busy and full. 'It is so difficult to be alone here,' she continued in a whisper; 'let us get into

the gardens.' And they escaped. And then, when they were out of hearing and of sight of any one, she said, 'This is a most critical time in your life, Endymion; it makes me very anxious. I look upon it as certain that you will be in office, and in all probability under my lord. He has said nothing to me about it, but I feel quite assured it will happen. It will be a great event. Poor papa began by being an under-secretary of state!' she continued in a moody tone, half speaking to herself, 'and all seemed so fair then, but he had no root. What I want, Endymion, is that you should have a root. There is too much chance and favour in your lot. They will fail you some day, some day too when I may not be by you. Even this great opening, which is at hand, would never have been at your command, but for a mysterious gift on which you never could have counted.'

'It is very true, Myra, but what then?'

'Why, then, I think we should guard against such contingencies. You know what is in my mind; we have spoken of it before, and not once only. I want you to marry, and you know whom.'

'Marriage is a serious affair!' said Endymion, with a distressed look.

'The most serious. It is the principal event for good or for evil in all lives. Had I not married, and married as I did, we should not have been here—and where, I dare not think.'

'Yes; but you made a happy marriage; one of the happiest that was ever known, I think.'

'And I wish you, Endymion, to make the same. I did not marry for love, though love came, and I brought happiness to one who made me happy. But had it been otherwise, if there had been no sympathy, or prospect of sympathy, I still should have married, for it was the only chance of saving you.'

'Dearest sister! Everything I have, I owe to you.'

'It is not much,' said Myra, 'but I wish to make it much. Power in every form, and in excess, is at your disposal if you be wise. There is a woman, I think with every charm, who loves you; her fortune may have no limit; she is a member of one of the most powerful families in England—a noble family

I may say, for my lord told me last night that Mr. Neuchatel would be instantly raised to the peerage, and you hesitate! By all the misery of the past—which never can be forgotten—for Heaven's sake, be wise; do not palter with such a chance.'

'If all be as you say, Myra, and I have no reason but your word to believe it is so—if, for example, of which I never saw any evidence, Mr. Neuchatel would approve, or even tolerate, this alliance—I have too deep and sincere a regard for his daughter, founded on much kindness to both of us, to mock her with the offer of a heart which she has not gained.'

'You say you have a deep and sincere regard for Adriana,' said his sister. 'Why, what better basis for enduring happiness can there be? You are not a man to marry for romantic sentiment, and pass your life in writing sonnets to your wife till you find her charms and your inspiration alike exhausted; you are already wedded to the State, you have been nurtured in the thoughts of great affairs from your very childhood, and even in the darkest hour of our horrible adversity. You are a man born for power and high condition, whose name in time ought to rank with those of the great statesmen of the continent, the true lords of Europe. Power, and power alone, should be your absorbing object, and all the accidents and incidents of life should only be considered with reference to that main result.'

'Well, I am only five-and-twenty after all. There is time yet to consider this.'

'Great men should think of Opportunity, and not of Time. Time is the excuse of feeble and puzzled spirits. They make time the sleeping partner of their lives to accomplish what ought to be achieved by their own will. In this case, there certainly is no time like the present. The opportunity is unrivalled. All your friends would, without an exception, be delighted if you now were wise.'

'I hardly think my friends have given it a thought,' said Endymion, a little flushed.

'There is nothing that would please Lady Montfort more.'

He turned pale. 'How do you know that?' he inquired.

'She told me so, and offered to help me in bringing about the result.'

'Very kind of her! Well, dearest Myra, you and Lord Roehampton have much to think of at this anxious moment. Let this matter drop. We have discussed it before, and we have discussed it enough. It is more than pain for me to differ from you on any point, but I cannot offer to Adriana a heart which belongs to another.'

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

All the high expectations of December at Princedown were doomed to disappointment; they were a further illustration of Lord Roehampton's saying, that there was no gambling like politics. The leader of the opposition came up to town, but he found nothing but difficulties, and a few days before Christmas he had resigned the proffered trust. The protectionist ministry were to remain in office, and to repeal the corn laws. The individual who was most baulked by this unexpected result was perhaps Lord Roehampton. He was a man who really cared for nothing but office and affairs, and being advanced in life, he naturally regretted a lost opportunity. But he never showed his annoyance. Always playful, and even taking refuge in a bantering spirit, the world seemed to go light with him when everything was dark and everybody despondent.

The discontent or indignation which the contemplated revolution in policy was calculated to excite in the Conservative party generally were to a certain degree neutralised for the moment by mysterious and confidential communications, circulated by Mr. Tadpole and the managers of the party, that the change was to be accompanied by 'immense compensations.' As parliament was to meet as soon as convenient after Christmas, and the statement of the regenerated ministry was then to be made immediately, every one held his hand, as they all felt the blow must be more efficient when the scheme of the government was known.

The Montforts were obliged to go to their castle, a visit the

sad necessity of which the formation of a new government, at one time, they had hoped might have prevented. The Roehamptons passed their Christmas with Mr. Sidney Wilton at Gaydene, where Endymion also and many of the opposition were guests. Waldershare took refuge with his friends the Beaumaris', full of revenge and unceasing combinations. He took down St. Barbe with him, whose services in the session might be useful. There had been a little misunderstanding between these two eminent personages during the late season. St. Barbe was not satisfied with his position in the new journal which Waldershare had established. He affected to have been ill-treated and deceived, and this with a mysterious shake of the head which seemed to intimate state secrets that might hereafter be revealed. The fact is, St. Barbe's political articles were so absurd that it was impossible to print them; but as his name stood high as a clever writer on matters with which he was acquainted, they permitted him, particularly as they were bound to pay him a high salary, to contribute essays on the social habits and opinions of the day, which he treated in a happy and taking manner. St. Barbe himself had such a quick perception of peculiarities, so fine a power of observation, and so keen a sense of the absurd, that when he revealed in confidence the causes of his discontent, it was almost impossible to believe that he was entirely serious. It seems that he expected this connection with the journal in question to have been, to use his own phrase, 'a closet affair,' and that he was habitually to have been introduced by the backstairs of the palace to the presence of Royalty to receive encouragement and inspiration. 'I do not complain of the pay,' he added, 'though I could get more by writing for Shuffle and Screw, but I expected a decoration. However, I shall probably stand for next parliament on the principles of the Mountain, so perhaps it is just as well.'

Parliament soon met, and that session began which will long be memorable. The 'immense compensations' were nowhere. Waldershare, who had only waited for this, resigned his office as Under-Secretary of State. This was a bad example and a blow, but nothing compared to the resignation of his great office in the Household by the Earl of Beaumaris. This involved

unhappily the withdrawal of Lady Beaumaris, under whose bright, inspiring roof the Tory party had long assembled, sanguine and bold. Other considerable peers followed the precedent of Lord Beaumaris, and withdrew their support from the ministry. Waldershare moved the amendment to the first reading of the obnoxious bill; but although defeated by a considerable majority, the majority was mainly formed of members of the opposition. Among these was Mr. Ferrars, who it was observed never opened his lips during the whole session.

This was not the case with Mr. Bertie Tremaine and the school of Pythagoras. The opportunity long waited for had at length arrived. There was a great parliamentary connection deserted by their leaders. This distinguished rank and file required officers. The cabinet of Mr. Bertie Tremaine was ready, and at their service. Mr. Bertie Tremaine seconded the amendment of Waldershare, and took the occasion of expounding the new philosophy, which seemed to combine the principles of Bentham with the practice of Lord Liverpool. 'I offered to you this,' he said reproachfully to Endymion; 'you might have been my secretary of state. Mr. Tremaine Bertie will now take it. He would rather have had an embassy, but he must make the sacrifice.'

The debates during the session were much carried on by the Pythagoreans, who never ceased chattering. They had men ready for every branch of the subject, and the debate was often closed by their chief in mystical sentences, which they cheered like awestruck zealots.

The great bill was carried, but the dark hour of retribution at length arrived. The ministry, though sanguine to the last of success, and not without cause, were completely and ignominiously defeated. The new government, long prepared, was at once formed. Lord Roehampton again became secretary of state, and he appointed Endymion to the post under him. 'I shall not press you unfairly,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine to Endymion, with encouraging condescension. 'I wish my men for a season to comprehend what is a responsible opposition. I am sorry Hortensius is your solicitor-general, for I had intended him always for my chancellor.'

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

Very shortly after the prorogation of parliament, an incident occurred which materially affected the position of Endymion. Lord Roehampton had a serious illness. Having a fine constitution, he apparently completely rallied from the attack, and little was known of it by the public. The world also, at that moment, was as usual much dispersed and distracted; dispersed in many climes, and distracted by the fatigue and hardships they annually endure, and which they call relaxation. Even the colleagues of the great statesman were scattered, and before they had realised that he had been seriously ill, they read of him in the fulfilment of official duties. But there was no mistake as to his state under his own roof. Lord Roehampton had, throughout the later period of his life, been in the habit of working at night. It was only at night that he could command that abstraction necessary for the consideration of great affairs. He was also a real worker. He wrote his own despatches, whenever they referred to matters of moment. He left to the permanent staff of his office little but the fulfilment of duties which, though heavy and multifarious, were duties of routine. The composition of these despatches was a source to Lord Roehampton of much gratification and excitement. They were of European fame, and their terse argument, their clear determination, and often their happy irony, were acknowledged in all the cabinets, and duly apprehended.

The physicians impressed upon Lady Roehampton that this night-work must absolutely cease. A neglect of their advice must lead to serious consequences; following it, there was no reason why her husband should not live for years, and continue to serve the State. Lord Roehampton must leave the House of Commons; he must altogether change the order of his life; he must seek more amusement in society, and yet keep early hours; and then he would find himself fresh and vigorous in the morning, and his work would rather benefit than distress him. It was all an affair of habit.

Lady Roehampton threw all her energies into this matter. She entertained for her lord a reverential affection, and his life to her seemed a precious deposit, of which she was the trustee. She succeeded where the physicians would probably have failed. Towards the end of the year Lord Roehampton was called up to the House of Lords for one of his baronies, and Endymion was informed that when parliament met, he would have to represent the Foreign Office in the House of Commons.

Waldershare heartily congratulated him. 'You have got what I most wished to have in the world; but I will not envy you, for envy is a vile passion. You have the good fortune to serve a genial chief. I had to deal with a Harley,—cold, suspicious, ambiguous, pretending to be profound, and always in a state of perplexity.'

It was not a very agreeable session. The potato famine did something more than repeal the corn laws. It proved that there was no floating capital left in the country; and when the Barings and Rothschilds combined, almost as much from public spirit as from private speculation, to raise a loan of a few millions for the minister, they absolutely found the public purse was exhausted, and had to supply the greater portion of the amount from their own resources. In one of the many financial debates that consequently occurred, Trenchard established himself by a clear and comprehensive view of the position of affairs, and by modestly reminding the House, that a year ago he had predicted the present condition of things, and indicated its inevitable cause.

This was the great speech on a great night, and Mr. Bertie Tremaine walked home with Trenchard. It was observed that Mr. Bertie Tremaine always walked home with the member who had made the speech of the evening.

'Your friends did not behave well to you,' he said in a hollow voice to Trenchard. 'They ought to have made you Secretary of the Treasury. Think of this. It is an important post, and may lead to anything; and, so far as I am concerned, it would give me real pleasure to see it.'

But besides the disquietude of domestic affairs, famine and failures competing in horrible catastrophe and the Bank Act

suspended, as the year advanced matters on the Continent became not less dark and troubled. Italy was mysteriously agitated; the pope announced himself a reformer; there were disturbances in Milan, Ancona, and Ferrara; the Austrians threatened the occupation of several States, and Sardinia offered to defend His Holiness from the Austrians. In addition to all this, there were reform banquets in France, a civil war in Switzerland, and the King of Prussia thought it prudent to present his subjects with a Constitution.

The Count of Ferroll about this time made a visit to England. He was always a welcome guest there, and had received the greatest distinction which England could bestow upon a foreigner; he had been elected an honorary member of White's. 'You may have troubles here,' he said to Lady Montfort, 'but they will pass; you will have mealy potatoes again and plenty of bank notes, but we shall not get off so cheaply. Everything is quite rotten throughout the Continent. This year is tranquillity to what the next will be. There is not a throne in Europe worth a year's purchase. My worthy master wants me to return home and be minister; I am to fashion for him a new constitution. I will never have anything to do with new constitutions; their inventors are always the first victims. Instead of making a constitution, he should make a country, and convert his heterogeneous domains into a patriotic dominion.'

'But how is that to be done?'

'There is only one way; by blood and iron.'

'My dear count, you shock me!'

'I shall have to shock you a great deal more before the inevitable is brought about.'

'Well, I am glad that there is something,' said Lady Montfort, 'which is inevitable. I hope it will come soon. I am sure this country is ruined. What with cheap bread at famine prices and these railroads, we seem quite finished. I thought one operation was to counteract the other; but they appear both to turn out equally fatal.'

Endymion had now one of those rare opportunities which, if men be equal to them, greatly affect their future career. As

the session advanced, debates on foreign affairs became frequent and deeply interesting. So far as the ministry was concerned, the burthen of these fell on the Under-Secretary of State. He was never wanting. The House felt that he had not only the adequate knowledge, but that it was knowledge perfectly digested; that his remarks and conduct were those of a man who had given constant thought to his duties, and was master of his subject. His oratorical gifts also began to be recognised. The power and melody of his voice had been before remarked, and that is a gift which much contributes to success in a popular assembly. He was ready without being too fluent. There were light and shade in his delivery. He repressed his power of sarcasm; but if unjustly and inaccurately attacked, he could be keen. Over his temper he had a complete control; if, indeed, his entire insensibility to violent language on the part of an opponent was not organic. All acknowledged his courtesy, and both sides sympathised with a young man who proved himself equal to no ordinary difficulties. In a word, Endymion was popular, and that popularity was not diminished by the fact of his being the brother of Lady Roehampton, who exercised great influence in society, and who was much beloved.

As the year advanced external affairs became daily more serious, and the country congratulated itself that its interests were entrusted to a minister of the experience and capacity of Lord Roehampton. That statesman seemed never better than when the gale ran high. Affairs in France began to assume the complexion that the Count of Ferroll had prophetically announced. If a crash occurred in that quarter, Lord Roehampton felt that all Europe might be in a blaze. Affairs were never more serious than at the turn of the year. Lord Roehampton told his wife that their holidays must be spent in St. James' Square, for he could not leave London; but he wished her to go to Gaydene, where they had been invited by Mr. Sidney Wilton to pass their Christmas as usual. Nothing, however, would induce her to quit his side. He seemed quite well, but the pressure of affairs was extreme; and sometimes, against all her remonstrances, he was again working at night. Such

remonstrances on other subjects would probably have been successful, for her influence over him was extreme. But to a minister responsible for the interests of a great country they are vain, futile, impossible. One might as well remonstrate with an officer on the field of battle on the danger he was incurring. She said to him one night in his library, where she paid him a little visit before she retired, 'My heart, I know it is no use my saying anything, and yet—remember your promise. This night-work makes me very unhappy.'

'I remember my promise, and I will try not to work at night again in a hurry, but I must finish this despatch. If I did not, I could not sleep, and you know sleep is what I require.'

'Good night, then.'

He looked up with his winning smile, and held out his lips. 'Kiss me,' he said; 'I never felt better.'

Lady Roehampton after a time slumbered; how long she knew not, but when she woke, her lord was not at her side. She struck a light and looked at her watch. It was past three o'clock; she jumped out of bed, and, merely in her slippers and her *robe de chambre*, descended to the library. It was a large, long room, and Lord Roehampton worked at the extreme end of it. The candles were nearly burnt out. As she approached him, she perceived that he was leaning back in his chair. When she reached him, she observed he was awake, but he did not seem to recognise her. A dreadful feeling came over her. She took his hand. It was quite cold. Her intellect for an instant seemed to desert her. She looked round her with an air void almost of intelligence, and then rushing to the bell she continued ringing it till some of the household appeared. A medical man was near at hand, and in a few minutes arrived, but it was a bootless visit. All was over, and all had been over, he said, 'for some time.'

CHAPTER LXXXV.

'Well, have you made up your government?' asked Lady Montfort of the prime minister as he entered her boudoir. He shook his head.

'Have you seen her?' he inquired.

'No, not yet; I suppose she will see me as soon as any one.'

'I am told she is utterly overwhelmed.'

'She was devoted to him; it was the happiest union I ever knew; but Lady Roehampton is not the woman to be utterly overwhelmed. She has too imperial a spirit for that.'

'It is a great misfortune,' said the prime minister. 'We have not been lucky since we took the reins.'

'Well, there is no use in deploring. There is nobody else to take the reins, so you may defy misfortunes. The question now is, what are you going to do?'

'Well, there seems to me only one thing to do. We must put Rawchester there.'

'Rawchester!' exclaimed Lady Montfort, 'what, "Niminy-Piminy"?'

'Well, he is conciliatory,' said the premier, 'and if you are not very clever, you should be conciliatory.'

'He never knows his own mind for a week together.'

'We will take care of his mind,' said the prime minister, 'but he has travelled a good deal, and knows the public men.'

'Yes,' said Lady Montfort, 'and the public men, I fear, know him.'

'Then he can make a good House of Lords' speech, and we have a first-rate man in the Commons; so it will do.'

'I do not think your first-rate man in the House of Commons will remain,' said Lady Montfort drily.

'You do not mean that?' said the prime minister, evidently alarmed.

'His health is delicate,' said Lady Montfort; 'had it not been for his devotion to Lord Roehampton, I know he thought of travelling for a couple of years.'

'Ferrars' health delicate?' said the premier; 'I thought he was the picture of health and youthful vigour. Health is one of the elements to be considered in calculating the career of a public man, and I have always predicted an eminent career for Ferrars, because, in addition to his remarkable talents, he had apparently such a fine constitution.'

'No health could stand working under Lord Rawchester.'

'Well, but what am I to do? I cannot make Mr. Ferrars secretary of state.'

'Why not?'

The prime minister looked considerably perplexed. Such a promotion could not possibly have occurred to him. Though a man of many gifts, and a statesman, he had been educated in high Whig routine, and the proposition of Lady Montfort was like recommending him to make a curate a bishop.

'Well,' he said, 'Ferrars is a very clever fellow. He is our rising young man, and there is no doubt that, if his health is not so delicate as you fear, he will mount high; but though our rising young man, he is a young man, much too young to be a secretary of state. He wants age, larger acquaintance with affairs, greater position, and more root in the country.'

'What was Mr. Canning's age, who held Mr. Ferrars' office, when he was made secretary of state? and what root in the country had he?'

When the prime minister got back to Downing Street, he sent immediately for his head whip. 'Look after Ferrars,' he said; 'they are trying to induce him to resign office. If he does, our embarrassments will be extreme. Lord Rawchester will be secretary of state; send a paragraph at once to the papers announcing it. But look after Ferrars, and immediately, and report to me.'

Lord Roehampton had a large entailed estate, though his affairs were always in a state of confusion. That seems almost the inevitable result of being absorbed in the great business of governing mankind. If there be exceptions among statesmen of the highest class, they will generally be found among those who have been chiefly in opposition, and so have had leisure and freedom of mind sufficient to manage their estates. Lord

Roehampton had, however, extensive powers of charging his estate in lieu of dower, and he had employed them to their utmost extent; so his widow was well provided for. The executors were Mr. Sidney Wilton and Endymion.

After a short period, Lady Roehampton saw Adriana, and not very long after, Lady Montfort. They both of them, from that time, were her frequent, if not constant, companions, but she saw no one else. Once only, since the terrible event, was she seen by the world, and that was when a tall figure, shrouded in the darkest attire, attended as chief mourner at the burial of her lord in Westminster Abbey. She remained permanently in London, not only because she had no country house, but because she wished to be with her brother. As time advanced she frequently saw Mr. Sidney Wilton, who, being chief executor of the will, and charged with all her affairs, had necessarily much on which to consult her. One of the greatest difficulties was to provide her with a suitable residence, for of course, she was not to remain in the family mansion in St. James' Square. That difficulty was ultimately overcome in a manner highly interesting to her feelings. Her father's mansion in Hill Street, where she had passed her prosperous and gorgeous childhood, was in the market, and she was most desirous to occupy it. 'It will seem like a great step towards the restoration,' she said to Endymion. 'My plans are, that you should give up the Albany, and that we should live together. I should like to live together in Hill Street; I should like to see our nursery once more. The past then will be a dream, or at least all the past that is disagreeable. My fortune is yours; as we are twins, it is likely that I may live as long as you do. But I wish you to be the master of the house, and in time receive your friends in a manner becoming your position. I do not think that I shall ever much care to go out again, but I may help you at home, and then you can invite women; a mere bachelor's house is always dull.'

There was one difficulty still in this arrangement. The mansion in Hill Street was not to be let, it was for sale, and the price naturally for such a mansion in such a situation, was considerable; quite beyond the means of Lady Roehampton,

who had a very ample income, but no capital. This difficulty however, vanished in a moment. Mr. Sidney Wilton purchased the house; he wanted an investment, and this was an excellent one; so Lady Roehampton became his tenant.

The change was great in the life of Myra, and she felt it. She loved her lord, and had cut off her beautiful hair, which reached almost to her feet, and had tied it round his neck in his coffin. But Myra, notwithstanding she was a woman, and a woman of transcendent beauty, had never had a romance of the heart. Until she married, her pride and her love for her brother, which was part of her pride, had absorbed her being. When she married, and particularly as time advanced, she felt all the misery of her existence had been removed, and nothing could exceed the tenderness and affectionate gratitude, and truly unceasing devotion, which she extended to the gifted being to whom she owed this deliverance. But it was not in the nature of things that she could experience those feelings which still echo in the heights of Meilleraie, and compared with which all the glittering accidents of fortune sink into insignificance.

The year rolled on, an agitated year of general revolution. Endymion himself was rarely in society, for all the time which the House of Commons spared to him he wished chiefly to dedicate to his sister. His brougham was always ready to take him up to Hill Street for one of those somewhat hurried, but amusing little dinners, which break the monotony of parliamentary life. And sometimes he brought a companion, generally Mr. Wilton, and sometimes they met Lady Montfort or Adriana, now ennobled as the daughter of Lord Hainault. There was much to talk about, even if they did not talk about themselves and their friends, for every day brought great events, fresh insurrections, new constitutions, changes of dynasties, assassinations of ministers, states of siege, evanescent empires, and premature republics.

On one occasion, having previously prepared his sister, who seemed not uninterested by the suggestion, Endymion brought Thornberry to dine in Hill Street. There was no one else present except Adriana. Job was a great admirer of Lady Roehampton, but was a little awestruck by her. He remembered her in her

childhood, a beautiful being who never smiled. She received him very graciously, and after dinner, inviting him to sit by her on the sofa, referred with delicacy to old times.

'Your ladyship,' said Thornberry, 'would not know that I live myself now at Hurstley.'

'Indeed!' said Myra, unaffectedly surprised.

'Well, it happened in this way; my father now is in years, and can no longer visit us as he occasionally did in Lancashire; so wishing to see us all, at least once more, we agreed to pay him a visit. I do not know how it exactly came about, but my wife took a violent fancy to the place. They all received us very kindly. The good rector and his dear kind wife made it very pleasant, and the archbishop was there—whom we used to call Mr. Nigel—only think! That is a wonderful affair. He is not at all high and mighty, but talked with us, and walked with us, just the same as in old days. He took a great fancy to my boy, John Hampden, and, after all, my boy is to go to Oxford, and not to Owens College, as I had first intended.'

'That is a great change.'

'Well, I wanted him to go to Owens College, I confess, but I did not care so much about Mill Hill. That was his mother's fancy; she was very strong about that. It is a Nonconformist school, but I am not a Nonconformist. I do not much admire dogmas, but I am a Churchman as my fathers were. However, John Hampden is not to go to Mill Hill. He has gone to a sort of college near Oxford, which the archbishop recommended to us; the principal, and all the tutors are clergymen—of course of our Church. My wife is quite delighted with it all.'

'Well, that is a good thing.'

'And so,' continued Thornberry, 'she got it into her head she should like to live at Hurstley, and I took the place. I am afraid I have been foolish enough to lay out a great deal of money there—for a place not my own. Your ladyship would not know the old hall. I have, what they call, restored it, and upon my word, except the new hall of the Clothworkers' Company, where I dined the other day, I do not know anything of the kind that is prettier.'

'The dear old hall!' murmured Lady Roehampton.

In time, though no one mentioned it, everybody thought that if an alliance ultimately took place between Lady Roehampton and Mr. Sidney Wilton, it would be the most natural thing in the world, and everybody would approve it. True, he was her father's friend, and much her senior, but then he was still good-looking, very clever, very much considered, and lord of a large estate, and at any rate he was a younger man than her late husband.

When these thoughts became more rife in society, and began to take the form of speech, the year was getting old, and this reminds us of a little incident which took place many months previously, at the beginning of the year, and which we ought to record.

Shortly after the death of Lord Roehampton, Prince Florestan called one morning in St. James' Square. He said he would not ask Lady Roehampton to see him, but he was obliged suddenly to leave England, and he did not like to depart without personally inquiring after her. He left a letter and a little packet. And the letter ran thus:—

'I am obliged, madam, to leave England suddenly, and it is probable that we shall never meet again. I should be happy if I had your prayers! This little jewel enclosed belonged to my mother, the Queen Agrippina. She told me that I was never to part with it, except to somebody I loved as much as herself. There is only one person in the world to whom I owe affection. It is to her who from the first was always kind to me, and who, through dreary years of danger and anxiety, has been the charm and consolation of the life of FLORESTAN.'

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

On the evening of the day on which Prince Florestan personally left the letter with Lady Roehampton, he quitted London with the Duke of St. Angelo and his aides-de-camp, and,

embarking in his steam yacht, which was lying at Southampton, quitted England. They pursued a prosperous course for about a week, when they passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and, not long afterwards, cast anchor in a small and solitary bay. There the prince and his companions, and half-a-dozen servants, well armed and in military attire, left the yacht, and proceeded on foot into the country for a short distance, when they arrived at a large farmhouse. Here, it was evident, they were expected. Men came forward with many horses, and mounted, and accompanied the party which had arrived. They advanced about ten miles, and halted as they were approaching a small but fortified town.

The prince sent the Duke of St. Angelo forward to announce his arrival to the governor, and to require him to surrender. The governor, however, refused, and ordered the garrison to fire on the invaders. This they declined to do; the governor, with many ejaculations, and stamping with rage, broke his sword, and the prince entered the town. He was warmly received, and the troops, amounting to about twelve hundred men, placed themselves at his disposal. The prince remained at this town only a couple of hours, and at the head of his forces advanced into the country. At a range of hills he halted, sent out reconnoitring parties, and pitched his camp. In the morning, the Marquis of Vallombrosa, with a large party of gentlemen well mounted, arrived, and were warmly greeted. The prince learnt from them that the news of his invasion had reached the governor of the province, who was at one of the most considerable cities of the kingdom, with a population exceeding two hundred thousand, and with a military division for its garrison. 'They will not wait for our arrival,' said Vallombrosa, 'but, trusting to their numbers, will come out and attack us.'

The news of the scouts being that the mountain passes were quite unoccupied by the enemy, the prince determined instantly to continue his advance, and take up a strong position on the other side of the range, and await his fate. The passage was well effected, and on the fourth day of the invasion the advanced guard of the enemy were in sight. The prince com-

manded that no one should attend him, but alone and tying a white handkerchief round his sword, he galloped up to the hostile lines, and said in a clear, loud voice, 'My men, this is the sword of my father!'

'Florestan for ever!' was the only and universal reply. The cheers of the advanced guard reached and were re-echoed by the main body. The commander-in-chief, bareheaded, came up to give in his allegiance and receive his majesty's orders. They were for immediate progress, and at the head of the army which had been sent out to destroy him, Florestan in due course entered the enthusiastic city which recognised him as its sovereign. The city was illuminated, and he went to the opera in the evening. The singing was not confined to the theatre. During the whole night the city itself was one song of joy and triumph, and that night no one slept.

After this there was no trouble and no delay. It was a triumphal march. Every town opened its gates, and devoted municipalities proffered golden keys. Every village sent forth its troop of beautiful maidens, scattering roses, and singing the national anthem which had been composed by Queen Agrippina. On the tenth day of the invasion King Florestan, utterly unopposed, entered the magnificent capital of his realm, and slept in the purple bed which had witnessed his princely birth.

Among all the strange revolutions of this year, this adventure of Florestan was not the least interesting to the English people Although society had not smiled on him, he had always been rather a favourite with the bulk of the population. His fine countenance, his capital horsemanship, his graceful bow that always won a heart, his youth, and love of sport, his English education, and the belief that he was sincere in his regard for the country where he had been so long a guest, were elements of popularity that, particularly now he was successful, were unmistakable. And certainly Lady Roehampton, in her solitude, did not disregard his career or conduct. They were naturally often in her thoughts, for there was scarcely a day in which his name did not figure in the newspapers, and always in connection with matters of general interest and concern. The government he established was liberal, but it was discreet,

and, though conciliatory, firm. 'If he declares for the English alliance,' said Waldershare, 'he is safe;' and he did declare for the English alliance, and the English people were very pleased by his declaration, which in their apprehension meant national progress, the amelioration of society, and increased exports.

The main point, however, which interested his subjects was his marriage. That was both a difficult and a delicate matter to decide. The great continental dynasties looked with some jealousy and suspicion on him, and the small reigning houses, who were all allied with the great continental dynasties, thought it prudent to copy their example. All these reigning families, whether large or small, were themselves in a perplexed and alarmed position at this period, very disturbed about their present, and very doubtful about their future. At last it was understood that a Princess of Saxe-Babel, though allied with royal and imperial houses, might share the diadem of a successful adventurer, and then in time, and when it had been sufficiently reiterated, paragraphs appeared unequivocally contradicting the statement, followed with agreeable assurances that it was unlikely that a Princess of Saxe-Babel, allied with royal and imperial houses, should unite herself to a parvenu monarch, however powerful. Then in turn these articles were stigmatised as libels, and entirely unauthorised, and no less a personage than a princess of the house of Saxe-Genesis was talked of as the future queen; but on referring to the 'Almanach de Gotha,' it was discovered that family had been extinct since the first French Revolution. So it seemed at last that nothing was certain, except that his subjects were very anxious that King Florestan should present them with a queen.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

As time flew on, the friends of Lady Roehampton thought, and spoke, with anxiety about her re-entrance into society. Mr. Sidney Wilton had lent Gaydene to her for the autumn, when

he always visited Scotland, and the winter had passed away uninterruptedly, at a charming and almost unknown watering-place, where she seemed the only visitant, and where she wandered about in silence on the sands. The time was fast approaching when the inevitable year of seclusion would expire, and Lady Roehampton gave no indication of any change in her life and habits. At length, after many appeals, and expostulations, and entreaties, and little scenes, the second year of the widowhood having advanced some months, it was decided that Lady Roehampton should re-enter society, and the occasion on which this was to take place was no mean one.

Lady Montfort was to give a ball early in June, and Royalty itself was to be her guests. The entertainments at Montfort House were always magnificent, but this was to exceed accustomed splendour. All the world was to be there, and all the world, who were not invited, were in as much despair as if they had lost their fortune or their character.

Lady Roehampton had a passion for light, provided the light was not supplied by gas or oil. Her saloons, even when alone, were always brilliantly illuminated. She held that the moral effect of such a circumstance on her temperament was beneficial, and not slight. It is a rare, but by no means a singular, belief. When she descended into her drawing-room on the critical night, its resplendence was some preparation for the scene which awaited her. She stood for a moment before the tall mirror which reflected her whole person. What were her thoughts? What was the impression that the fair vision conveyed?

Her countenance was grave, but it was not sad. Myra had now completed, or was on the point of completing, her thirtieth year. She was a woman of transcendent beauty; perhaps she might justly be described as the most beautiful woman then alive. Time had even improved her commanding mien, the graceful sweep of her figure and the voluptuous undulation of her shoulders; but time also had spared those charms which are more incidental to early youth, the splendour of her complexion, the whiteness of her teeth, and the lustre of her violet eyes. She had cut off in her grief the profusion of her dark

chestnut locks, that once reached to her feet, and she wore her hair as, what was then and perhaps is now called, a crop, but it was luxuriant in natural quantity and rich in colour, and most effectively set off her arched brow, and the oval of her fresh and beauteous cheek. The crop was crowned to-night by a coronet of brilliants.

'Your carriage is ready, my lady,' said a servant; 'but there is a gentleman below who has brought a letter for your ladyship, and which, he says, he must personally deliver to you, madam. I told him your ladyship was going out and could not see him, but he put his card in this envelope, and requested that I would hand it to you, madam. He says he will only deliver the letter to your ladyship, and not detain you a moment.'

Lady Roehampton opened the envelope, and read the card, 'The Duke of St. Angelo.'

'The Duke of St. Angelo!' she murmured to herself, and looked for a moment abstracted. Then turning to the servant, she said, 'He must be shown up.'

'Madam,' said the duke as he entered, and bowed with much ceremony, 'I am ashamed of appearing to be an intruder, but my commands were to deliver this letter to your ladyship immediately on my arrival, whatever the hour. I have only this instant arrived. We had a bad passage. I know your ladyship's carriage is at the door. I will redeem my pledge and not trespass on your time for one instant. If your ladyship requires me, I am ever at your command.'

'At Carlton Gardens?'

'No; at our embassy.'

'His Majesty, I hope, is well?'

'In every sense, my lady,' and bowing to the ground the duke withdrew.

She broke the seal of the letter while still standing, and held it to a sconce that was on the mantel-piece, and then she read:

'You were the only person I called upon when I suddenly left England. I had no hope of seeing you, but it was the homage of gratitude and adoration. Great events have happened since we last met. I have realised my dreams, dreams which I

sometimes fancied you, and you alone, did not depreciate or discredit, and, in the sweetness of your charity, would not have been sorry were they accomplished.

'I have established what I believe to be a strong and just government in a great kingdom. I have not been uninfluenced by the lessons of wisdom I gained in your illustrious land. I have done some things which it was a solace for me to believe you would not altogether disapprove.

'My subjects are anxious that the dynasty I have re-established should not be evanescent. Is it too bold to hope that I may find a companion in you to charm and to counsel me? I can offer you nothing equal to your transcendent merit, but I can offer you the heart and the throne of

'FLORESTAN.'

Still holding the letter in one hand, she looked around as if some one might be present. Her cheek was scarlet, and there was for a moment an expression of wildness in her glance. Then she paced the saloon with an agitated step, and then she read the letter again and again, and still she paced the saloon. The whole history of her life revolved before her; every scene, every character, every thought, and sentiment, and passion. The brightness of her nursery days, and Hurstley with all its miseries, and Hainault with its gardens, and the critical hour, which had opened to her a future of such unexpected lustre and happiness.

The clock had struck more than once during this long and terrible soliloquy, wherein she had to search and penetrate her inmost heart, and now it struck two. She started, and hurriedly rang the bell.

'I shall not want the carriage to-night,' she said, and when again alone, she sat down and, burying her face in her alabaster arms, for a long time remained motionless.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

Had he been a youth about to make a *début* in the great world, Sidney Wilton could not have been more agitated than he felt at the prospect of the fête at Montfort House. Lady Roehampton, after nearly two years of retirement, was about to re-enter society. During this interval she had not been estranged from him. On the contrary, he had been her frequent and customary companion. Except Adriana, and Lady Montfort, and her brother, it might almost be said, her only one. Why then was he agitated? He had been living in a dream for two years, cherishing wild thoughts of exquisite happiness. He would have been content, had the dream never been disturbed; but this return to hard and practical life of her whose unconscious witchery had thrown a spell over his existence, roused him to the reality of his position, and it was one of terrible emotion.

During the life of her husband, Sidney Wilton had been the silent adorer of Myra. With every accomplishment and every advantage that are supposed to make life delightful—a fine countenance, a noble mien, a manner natural and attractive, an ancient lineage, and a vast estate—he was the favourite of society, who did more than justice to his talents, which, though not brilliant, were considerable, and who could not too much appreciate the high tone of his mind; his generosity and courage, and true patrician spirit which inspired all his conduct, and guided him ever to do that which was liberal, and gracious, and just.

There was only one fault which society found in Sidney Wilton; he would not marry. This was provoking, because he was the man of all others who ought to marry, and make a heroine happy. Society did not give it up till he was forty, about the time he became acquainted with Lady Roehampton; and that incident threw no light on his purposes or motives, for he was as discreet as he was devoted, and Myra herself was unconscious of his being anything to her save the dearest friend of her father, and the most cherished companion of her husband.

When one feels deeply, one is apt to act suddenly, perhaps rashly. There are moments in life when suspense can be borne no longer. And Sidney Wilton, who had been a silent votary for more than ten years, now felt that the slightest delay in his fate would be intolerable. It was the ball at Montfort House that should be the scene of this decision of destiny.

She was about to re-enter society, radiant as the morn, amid flowers and music, and all the accidents of social splendour. His sympathetic heart had been some solace to her in her sorrow and her solitude. Now, in the joyous blaze of life, he was resolved to ask her whether it were impossible that they should never again separate, and in the crowd, as well as when alone, feel their mutual devotion.

Mr. Wilton was among those who went early to Montfort House, which was not his wont; but he was restless and disquieted. She could hardly have arrived; but there would be some there who would speak of her. That was a great thing. Sidney Wilton had arrived at that state when conversation can only interest on one subject. When a man is really in love, he is disposed to believe that, like himself, everybody is thinking of the person who engrosses his brain and heart.

The magnificent saloons, which in half an hour would be almost impassable, were only sprinkled with guests, who, however, were constantly arriving. Mr. Wilton looked about him in vain for the person who, he was quite sure, could not then be present. He lingered by the side of Lady Montfort, who bowed to those who came, but who could spare few consecutive words, even to Mr. Wilton, for her watchful eye expected every moment to be summoned to descend her marble staircase and receive her royal guests.

The royal guests arrived; there was a grand stir, and many gracious bows, and some cordial, but dignified, shake-hands. The rooms were crowded; yet space in the ball-room was well preserved, so that the royal vision might range with facility from its golden chairs to the beauteous beings, and still more beautiful costumes, displaying with fervent loyalty their fascinating charms.

There was a new band to-night, that had come from some

distant but celebrated capital; musicians known by fame to everybody, but whom nobody had ever heard. They played wonderfully on instruments of new invention, and divinely upon old ones. It was impossible that anything could be more gay and inspiriting than their silver bugles, and their carillons of tinkling bells.

They found an echo in the heart of Sidney Wilton, who, seated near the entrance of the ball-room, watched every arrival with anxious expectation. But the anxiety vanished for a moment under the influence of the fantastic and frolic strain. It seemed a harbinger of happiness and joy. He fell into a reverie, and wandered with a delightful companion in castles of perpetual sunshine, and green retreats, and pleasant terraces.

But the lady never came.

Then the strain changed. There happened to be about this time a truly diabolic opera much in vogue, with unearthly choruses, and dances of fiendish revelry. These had been skilfully adapted and introduced by the musicians, converting a dark and tragic theme into wild and grotesque merriment. But they could not succeed in diverting the mind of one of their audience from the character of the original composition. Dark thoughts and images fell upon the spirit of Sidney Wilton; his hope and courage left him. He almost felt he could not execute to-night the bold purpose he had brooded over. He did not feel in good fortune. There seemed some demon gibbering near him, and he was infinitely relieved, like a man released from some mesmeric trance, when the music ceased, the dance broke up, and he found himself surrounded, not by demons, but the usual companions of his daily life.

But the lady never came.

'Where can your sister be?' said Lady Montfort to Endymion. 'She promised me to come early; something must have happened. Is she ill?'

'Quite well; I saw her before I left Hill Street. She wished me to come alone, as she would not be here early.'

'I hope she will be in time for the royal supper table; I quite count on her.'

'She is sure to be here.'

Lord Hainault was in earnest conversation with Baron Sergius, now the minister of King Florestan at the Court of St. James'. It was a wise appointment, for Sergius knew intimately all the English statesmen of eminence, and had known them for many years. They did not look upon him as the mere representative of a revolutionary and parvenu sovereign; he was quite one of themselves, had graduated at the Congress of Vienna, and, it was believed, had softened many subsequent difficulties by his sagacity. He had always been a cherished guest at Apsley House, and it was known the great duke often consulted him. 'As long as Sergius sways his councils, He will indulge in no adventures,' said Europe. 'As long as Sergius remains here, the English alliance is safe,' said England. After Europe and England, the most important confidence to obtain was that of Lord Hainault, and Baron Sergius had been not unsuccessful in that respect.

'Your master has only to be liberal and steady,' said Lord Hainault, with his accustomed genial yet half-sarcastic smile, 'and he may have anything he likes. But we do not want any wars; they are not liked in the City.'

'Our policy is peace,' said Sergius.

'I think we ought to congratulate Sir Peter,' said Mr. Waldershare to Adriana, with whom he had been dancing, and whom he was leading back to Lady Hainault. 'Sir Peter, here is a lady who wishes to congratulate you on your deserved elevation.'

'Well, I do not know what to say about it,' said the former Mr. Vigo, highly gratified, but a little confused; 'my friends would have it.'

'Ay, ay,' said Waldershare, '"at the request of friends;" the excuse I gave for publishing my sonnets.' And then, advancing, he delivered his charge to her *chaperon*, who looked dreamy, abstracted, and uninterested.

'We have just been congratulating the new baronet, Sir Peter Vigo,' said Waldershare.

'Ah!' said Lady Hainault with a contemptuous sigh, 'he is, at any rate, not obliged to change his name. The desire to change one's name does indeed appear to me to be a singular

folly. If your name had been disgraced, I could understand it, as I could understand a man then going about in a mask. But the odd thing is, the persons who always want to change their names are those whose names are the most honoured.'

'Oh, you are here!' said Mr. St. Barbe acidly to Mr. Seymour Hicks. 'I think you are everywhere. I suppose they will make you a baronet next. Have you seen the batch? I could not believe my eyes when I read it. I believe the government is demented. Not a single literary man among them. Not that I wanted their baronetcy. Nothing would have tempted me to accept one. But there is Gushy; he, I know, would have liked it. I must say I feel for Gushy; his works only selling half what they did, and then thrown over in this insolent manner!'

'Gushy is not in society,' said Mr. Seymour Hicks in a solemn tone of contemptuous pity.

'That is society,' said St. Barbe, as he received a bow of haughty grace from Mrs. Rodney, who, fascinating and fascinated, was listening to the enamoured murmurs of an individual with a very bright star and a very red ribbon.

'I dined with the Rodneys yesterday,' said Mr. Seymour Hicks; 'they do the thing well.'

'You dined there!' exclaimed St. Barbe. 'It is very odd, they have never asked me. Not that I would have accepted their invitation. I avoid parvenus. They are too fidgety for my taste. I require repose, and only dine with the old nobility.'

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

The Right Honourable Job Thornberry and Mrs. Thornberry had received an invitation to the Montfort ball. Job took up the card, and turned it over more than once, and looked at it as if it were some strange animal, with an air of pleased and yet cynical perplexity; then he shrugged his shoulders and mur-

mured to himself, 'No; I don't think that will do. Besides, I must be at Hurstley by that time.'

Going to Hurstley now was not so formidable an affair as it was in Endymion's boyhood. Then the journey occupied a whole and wearisome day. Little Hurstley had become a busy station of the great Slap-Bang railway, and a despatch train landed you at the bustling and flourishing hostelry, our old and humble friend, the Horse Shoe, within the two hours. It was a rate that satisfied even Thornberry, and almost reconciled him to the too frequent presence of his wife and family at Hurstley, a place to which Mrs. Thornberry had, it would seem, become passionately attached.

'There is a charm about the place, I must say,' said Job to himself, as he reached his picturesque home on a rich summer evening; 'and yet I hated it as a boy. To be sure, I was then discontented and unhappy, and now I have every reason to be much the reverse. Our feelings affect even scenery. It certainly is a pretty place; I really think one of the prettiest places in England.'

Job was cordially welcomed. His wife embraced him, and the younger children clung to him with an affection which was not diminished by the remembrance that their father never visited them with empty hands. His eldest son, a good-looking and well-grown stripling, just home for the holidays, stood apart, determined to show he was a man of the world, and superior to the weakness of domestic sensibility. When the hubbub was a little over, he advanced and shook hands with his father with a certain dignity.

'And when did you arrive, my boy? I was looking up your train in Bradshaw as I came along. I made out you should get the branch at Culvers Gate.'

'I drove over,' replied the son; 'I and a friend of mine drove tandem, and I'll bet we got here sooner than we should have done by the branch.'

'Hem!' said Job Thornberry.

'Job,' said Mrs. Thornberry, 'I have made two engagements for you this evening. First, we will go and see your father, and then we are to drink tea at the rectory.'

'Hem!' said Job Thornberry; 'well, I would rather the first evening should have been a quiet one; but let it be so.'

The visit to the father was kind, dutiful, and wearisome. There was not a single subject on which the father and son had thoughts in common. The conversation of the father took various forms of expressing his wonder that his son had become what he was, and the son could only smile, and turn the subject, by asking after the produce of some particular field that had been prolific or obstinate in old days. Mrs. Thornberry looked absent, and was thinking of the rectory; the grandson who had accompanied them was silent and supercilious; and everybody felt relieved when Mrs. Thornberry, veiling her impatience by her fear of keeping her father-in-law up late, made a determined move and concluded the domestic ceremony.

The rectory afforded a lively contrast to the late scene. Mr. and Mrs. Penruddock were full of intelligence and animation. Their welcome of Mr. Thornberry was exactly what it ought to have been; respectful, even somewhat deferential, but cordial and unaffected. They conversed on all subjects, public and private, and on both seemed equally well informed, for they not only read more than one newspaper, but Mrs. Penruddock had an extensive correspondence, the conduct of which was one of the chief pleasures and excitements of her life. Their tea-equipage, too, was a picture of abundance and refinement. Such pretty china, and such various and delicious cates! White bread, and brown bread, and plum cakes, and seed cakes, and no end of cracknels, and toasts, dry or buttered. Mrs. Thornberry seemed enchanted and gushing with affection,—everybody was dear or dearest. Even the face of John Hampden beamed with condescending delight as he devoured a pyramid of dainties.

Just before the tea-equipage was introduced Mrs. Penruddock rose from her seat and whispered something to Mrs. Thornberry, who seemed pleased and agitated and a little blushing, and then their hostess addressed Job and said, 'I was mentioning to your wife that the archbishop was here, and that I hope you would not dislike meeting him.'

And very shortly after this, the archbishop, who had been

taking a village walk, entered the room. It was evident that he was intimate with the occupiers of Hurstley Hall. He addressed Mrs. Thornberry with the ease of habitual acquaintance, while John Hampden seemed almost to rush into his arms. Job himself had seen his Grace in London, though he had never had the opportunity of speaking to him, but yielded to his cordiality, when the archbishop, on his being named, said, 'It is a pleasure to meet an old friend, and in times past a kind one.'

It was a most agreeable evening. The archbishop talked to every one, but never seemed to engross the conversation. He talked to the ladies of gardens, and cottages, and a little of books, seemed deeply interested in the studies and progress of the grandson Thornberry, who evidently idolised him; and in due course his Grace was engaged in economical speculations with Job himself, who was quite pleased to find a priest as liberal and enlightened as he was able and thoroughly informed. An hour before midnight they separated, though the archbishop attended them to the hall.

Mrs. Thornberry's birthday was near at hand, which Job always commemorated with a gift. It had commenced with some severe offering, like 'Paradise Lost,' then it fell into the gentler form of Tennyson, and, of late, unconsciously under the influence of his wife, it had taken the shape of a bracelet or a shawl.

This evening, as he was rather feeling his way as to what might please her most, Mrs. Thornberry embracing him, and hiding her face on his breast, murmured, 'Do not give me any jewel, dear Job. What I should like would be that you should restore the chapel here.'

'Restore the chapel here! oh, oh!' said Job Thornberry.

CHAPTER XC.

The archbishop called at Hurstley House the next day. It was a visit to Mr. Thornberry, but all the family was soon present, and clustered round the visitor. Then they walked together in the gardens, which had become radiant under the taste and unlimited expenditure of Mrs. Thornberry; beds glowing with colour or rivalling mosaics, choice conifers with their green or purple fruit, and rare roses with their fanciful and beauteous names; one, by the by, named 'Mrs. Penruddock,' and a very gorgeous one, 'The Archbishop.'

As they swept along the terraces, restored to their pristine comeliness, and down the green avenues bounded by copper beeches and ancient yews, where men were sweeping away every leaf and twig that had fallen in the night and marred the consummate order, it must have been difficult for the Archbishop of Tyre not to recall the days gone by, when this brilliant and finished scene, then desolate and neglected, the abode of beauty and genius, yet almost of penury, had been to him a world of deep and familiar interest. Yes, he was walking in the same glade where he had once pleaded his own cause with an eloquence which none of his most celebrated sermons had excelled. Did he think of this? If he did, it was only to wrench the thought from his memory. Archbishops who are yet young, who are resolved to be cardinals, and who may be popes, are superior to all human weakness.

'I should like to look at your chapel,' said his Grace to Mr. Thornberry; 'I remember it a lumber room, and used to mourn over its desecration.'

'I never was in it,' said Job, 'and cannot understand why my wife is so anxious about it as she seems to be. When we first went to London, she always sate under the Reverend Socinus Frost, and seemed very satisfied. I have heard him; a sensible man—but sermons are not much in my way, and I do not belong to his sect, or indeed any other.'

However, they went to the chapel all the same, for Mrs.

Thornberry was resolved on the visit. It was a small chamber, but beautifully proportioned, like the mansion itself—of a blended Italian and Gothic style. The roof was flat, but had been richly gilt and painted, and was sustained by corbels of angels, divinely carved. There had been some pews in the building; some had fallen to pieces, and some remained, but these were not in the original design. The sacred table had disappeared, but two saintly statues, sculptured in black oak, seemed still to guard the spot which it had consecrated.

'I wonder what became of the communion table?' said Job.

'Oh! my dear father, do not call it a communion table,' exclaimed John Hampden pettishly.

'Why, what should I call it, my boy?'

'The altar.'

'Why, what does it signify what we call it? The thing is the same.'

'Ah!' exclaimed the young gentleman, in a tone of contemptuous enthusiasm, 'it is all the difference in the world. There should be a stone altar and a reredos. We have put up a reredos in our chapel at Bradley. All the fellows subscribed; I gave a sovereign.'

'Well, I must say,' said the archbishop, who had been standing in advance with Mrs. Thornberry and the children, while this brief and becoming conversation was taking place between father and son, 'I think you could hardly do a better thing than restore this chapel, Mr. Thornberry, but there must be no mistake about it. It must be restored to the letter, and it is a style that is not commonly understood. I have a friend, however, who is master of it, the most rising man in his profession, as far as church architecture is concerned, and I will get him just to run down and look at this, and if, as I hope, you resolve to restore it, rest assured he will do you justice, and you will be proud of your place of worship.'

'I do not care how much we spend on our gardens,' said Job, 'for they are transitory pleasures, and we enjoy what we produce; but why I should restore a chapel in a house which does not belong to myself is not so clear to me.'

'But it should belong to yourself,' rejoined the archbishop. 'Hurstley is not in the market, but it is to be purchased. Take it altogether, I have always thought it one of the most enviable possessions in the world. The house, when put in order, would be one of the ornaments of the kingdom. The acreage, though considerable, is not overwhelming, and there is a range of wild country of endless charm. I wandered about it in my childhood and my youth, and I have never known anything equal to it. Then as to the soil and all that, you know it. You are a son of the soil. You left it for great objects, and you have attained those objects. They have given you fame as well as fortune. There would be something wonderfully dignified and graceful in returning to the land after you have taken the principal part in solving the difficulties which pertained to it, and emancipating it from many perils.'

'I am sure it would be the happiest day of my life, if Job would purchase Hurstley,' said Mrs. Thornberry.

'I should like to go to Oxford, and my father purchase Hurstley,' said the young gentleman. 'If we have not landed property, I would sooner have none. If we have not land, I should like to go into the Church, and if I may not go to Oxford, I would go to Cuddesdon at once. I know it can be done, for I know a fellow who has done it.'

Poor Job Thornberry! He had ruled multitudes, and had conquered and commanded senates. His Sovereign had made him one of her privy councillors, and half a million of people had returned him their representative to parliament. And here he stood silent, and a little confused; sapped by his wife, bullied by his son, and after having passed a great part of his life in denouncing sacerdotalism, finding his whole future career chalked out, without himself being consulted, by a priest who was so polite, sensible, and so truly friendly, that his manner seemed to deprive its victims of every faculty of retort or repartee. Still he was going to say something when the door opened, and Mrs. Penruddock appeared, exclaiming in a cheerful voice, 'I thought I should find you here. I would not have troubled your Grace, but this letter marked "private, immediate, and to be forwarded," has been wandering about for

some time, and I thought it was better to bring it to you at once.'

The Archbishop of Tyre took the letter, and seemed to start as he read the direction. Then he stood aside, opened it, and read its contents. The letter was from Lady Roehampton, desiring to see him as soon as possible on a matter of the utmost gravity, and entreating him not to delay his departure, wherever he might be.

'I am sorry to quit you all,' said his Grace; 'but I must go up to town immediately. The business is urgent.'

CHAPTER XCI.

ENDYMION arrived at home very late from the Montfort ball, and rose in consequence at an unusually late hour. He had taken means to become sufficiently acquainted with the cause of his sister's absence the night before, so he had no anxiety on that head. Lady Roehampton had really intended to have been present, was indeed dressed for the occasion; but when the moment of trial arrived, she was absolutely unequal to the effort. All this was amplified in a little note from his sister, which his valet brought him in the morning. What, however, considerably surprised him in this communication was her announcement that her feelings last night had proved to her that she ought not to remain in London, and that she intended to find solitude and repose in the little watering-place where she had passed a tranquil autumn during the first year of her widowhood. What completed his astonishment, however, was the closing intimation that, in all probability, she would have left town before he rose. The moment she had got a little settled she would write to him, and when business permitted, he must come and pay her a little visit.

'She was always capricious,' exclaimed Lady Montfort, who had not forgotten the disturbance of her royal supper-table.

'Hardly that, I think,' said Endymion. 'I have always looked on Myra as a singularly consistent character.'

'I know, you never admit your sister has a fault.'

'You said the other day yourself that she was the only perfect character you knew.'

'Did I say that? I think her capricious.'

'I do not think you are capricious,' said Endymion, 'and yet the world sometimes says you are.'

'I change my opinion of persons when my taste is offended,' said Lady Montfort. 'What I admired in your sister, though I confess I sometimes wished not to admire her, was that she never offended my taste.'

'I hope satisfied it,' said Endymion.

'Yes, satisfied it, always satisfied it. I wonder what will be her lot, for, considering her youth, her destiny has hardly begun. Somehow or other, I do not think she will marry Sidney Wilton.'

'I have sometimes thought that would be,' said Endymion.

'Well, it would be, I think, a happy match. All the circumstances would be collected that form what is supposed to be happiness. But tastes differ about destinies as well as about manners. For my part, I think to have a husband who loved you, and he clever, accomplished, charming, ambitious, would be happiness; but I doubt whether your sister cares so much about these things. She may, of course does, talk to you more freely; but with others, in her most open hours, there seems a secret fund of reserve in her character which I never could penetrate, except, I think, it is a reserve which does not originate in a love of tranquillity, but quite the reverse. She is a strong character.'

'Then, hardly a capricious one.'

'No, not capricious; I only said that to tease you. I am capricious; I know it. I disregard people sometimes that I have patronised and flattered. It is not merely that I have changed my opinion of them, but I positively hate them.'

'I hope you will never hate me,' said Endymion.

'You have never offended my taste yet,' said Lady Montfort with a smile.

Endymion was engaged to dine to-day with Mr. Bertie Tremaine. Although now in hostile political camps, that great leader of men never permitted their acquaintance to cease. 'He is young,' reasoned Mr. Bertie Tremaine; 'every political party changes its principles on an average once in ten years. Those who are young must often then form new connections, and Ferrars will then come to me. He will be ripe and experienced, and I could give him a good deal. I do not want numbers. I want men. In opposition, numbers often only embarrass. The power of the future is ministerial capacity. The leader with a cabinet formed will be the minister of England. He is not to trouble himself about numbers; that is an affair of the constituencies.'

Male dinners are in general not amusing. When they are formed, as they usually are, of men who are supposed to possess a strong and common sympathy—political, sporting, literary, military, social—there is necessarily a monotony of thought and feeling, and of the materials which induce thought and feeling. In a male dinner of party politicians, conversation soon degenerates into what is termed 'shop;' anecdotes about divisions, criticism of speeches, conjectures about office, speculations on impending elections, and above all, that heinous subject on which enormous fibs are ever told, the registration. There are, however, occasional glimpses in their talk which would seem to intimate that they have another life outside the Houses of Parliament. But that extenuating circumstance does not apply to the sporting dinner. There they begin with odds and handicaps, and end with handicaps and odds, and it is doubtful whether it ever occurs to any one present, that there is any other existing combination of atoms than odds and handicaps. A dinner of wits is proverbially a palace of silence; and the envy and hatred which all literary men really feel for each other, especially when they are exchanging dedications of mutual affection, always ensure, in such assemblies, the agreeable presence of a general feeling of painful constraint. If a good thing occurs to a guest, he will not express it, lest his neighbour, who is publishing a novel in numbers, shall appropriate it next month, or he himself, who has the same responsibility of pro-

duction, be deprived of its legitimate appearance. Those who desire to learn something of the manœuvres at the Russian and Prussian reviews, or the last rumour at Aldershot or the military clubs, will know where to find this feast of reason. The flow of soul in these male festivals is perhaps, on the whole, more genial when found in a society of young gentlemen, graduates of the Turf and the Marlborough, and guided in their benignant studies by the gentle experience and the mild wisdom of White's. The startling scandal, the rattling anecdote, the astounding leaps, and the amazing shots, afford for the moment a somewhat pleasing distraction, but when it is discovered that all these habitual flim-flams are, in general, the airy creatures of inaccuracy and exaggeration—that the scandal is not true, the anecdote has no foundation, and that the feats of skill and strength are invested with the organic weakness of tradition, the vagaries lose something of the charm of novelty, and are almost as insipid as claret from which the bouquet has evaporated.

The male dinners of Mr. Bertie Tremaine were an exception to the general reputation of such meetings. They were never dull. In the first place, though to be known at least by reputation was an indispensable condition of being present, he brought different classes together, and this, at least for once, stimulates and gratifies curiosity. His house too was open to foreigners of celebrity, without reference to their political parties or opinions. Every one was welcome except absolute assassins. The host too had studied the art of developing character and conversation, and if sometimes he was not so successful in this respect as he deserved, there was no lack of amusing entertainment, for in these social encounters Mr. Bertie Tremaine was a reserve in himself, and if nobody else would talk, he would avail himself of the opportunity of pouring forth the treasures of his own teeming intelligence. His various knowledge, his power of speech, his eccentric paradoxes, his pompous rhetoric, relieved by some happy sarcasm, and the obvious sense, in all he said and did, of innate superiority to all his guests, made these exhibitions extremely amusing.

'What Bertie Tremaine will end in,' Endymion would some-

times say, 'perplexes me. Had there been no revolution in 1832, and he had entered parliament for his family borough, I think he must by this time have been a minister. Such tenacity of purpose could scarcely fail. But he has had to say and do so many odd things, first to get into parliament, and secondly to keep there, that his future now is not so clear. When I first knew him, he was a Benthamite; at present, I sometimes seem to foresee that he will end by being the leader of the Protectionists and the Protestants.'

'And a good strong party too,' said Trenchard, 'but query whether strong enough?'

'That is exactly what Bertie Tremaine is trying to find out.'

Mr. Bertie Tremaine's manner in receiving his guests was courtly and ceremonious; a contrast to the free and easy style of the time. But it was adopted after due reflection. 'No man can tell what will be the position he may be called upon to fill. But he has a right to assume he will always be ascending. I, for example, may be destined to be the president of a republic, the regent of a monarchy, or a sovereign myself. It would be painful and disagreeable to have to change one's manner at a perhaps advanced period of life, and become liable to the unpopular imputation that you had grown arrogant and overbearing. On the contrary, in my case, whatever my elevation, there will be no change. My brother, Mr. Tremaine Bertie, acts on a different principle. He is a Sybarite, and has a general contempt for mankind, certainly for the mob and the middle class, but he is "Hail fellow, well met!" with them all. He says it answers at elections; I doubt it. I myself represent a popular constituency, but I believe I owe my success in no slight measure to the manner in which I gave my hand when I permitted it to be touched. As I say sometimes to Mr. Tremaine Bertie, "You will find this habit of social familiarity embarrassing when I send you to St. Petersburg or Vienna."'

Waldershare dined there, now a peer, though, as he rejoiced to say, not a peer of parliament. An Irish peer, with an English constituency, filled, according to Waldershare, the most

enviable of positions. His rank gave him social influence, and his seat in the House of Commons that power which all aspire to obtain. The cynosure of the banquet, however, was a gentleman who had, about a year before, been the president of a republic for nearly six weeks, and who being master of a species of rhapsodical rhetoric, highly useful in troubled times, when there is no real business to transact, and where there is nobody to transact it, had disappeared when the treasury was quite empty, and there were no further funds to reward the enthusiastic citizens who had hitherto patriotically maintained order at wages about double in amount to what they had previously received in their handicrafts. This great reputation had been brought over by Mr. Tremaine Bertie, now introducing him into English political society. Mr. Tremaine Bertie hung upon the accents of the oracle, every word of which was intended to be picturesque or profound, and then surveyed his friends with a glance of appreciating wonder. Sensible Englishmen, like Endymion and Trenchard, looked upon the whole exhibition as fustian, and received the revelations with a smile of frigid courtesy.

The presence, however, of this celebrity of six weeks gave occasionally a tone of foreign politics to the conversation, and the association of ideas, which, in due course, rules all talk, brought them, among other incidents and instances, to the remarkable career of King Florestan.

'And yet he has his mortifications,' said a sensible man. 'He wants a wife, and the princesses of the world will not furnish him with one.'

'What authority have you for saying so?' exclaimed the fiery Waldershare. 'The princesses of the world would be great fools if they refused such a man, but I know of no authentic instance of such denial.'

'Well, it is the common rumour.'

'And, therefore, probably a common falsehood.'

'Were he wise,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'King Florestan would not marry. Dynasties are unpopular; especially new ones. The present age is monarchical, but not dynastic. The king, who is a man of reach, and who has been pondering such

circumstances all his life, is probably well aware of this, and will not be such a fool as to marry.'

'How is the monarchy to go on, if there is to be no successor?' inquired Trenchard. 'You would not renew the Polish constitution?'

'The Polish constitution, by the by, was not so bad a thing,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'Under it a distinguished Englishman might have mixed with the crowned heads of Europe, as Sir Philip Sidney nearly did. But I was looking to something superior to the Polish constitution, or perhaps any other; I was contemplating a monarchy with the principle of adoption. That would give you all the excellence of the Polish constitution, and the order and constancy in which it failed. It would realise the want of the age; monarchical, not dynastical, institutions, and it would act independent of the passions and intrigues of the multitude. The principle of adoption was the secret of the strength and endurance of Rome. It gave Rome alike the Scipios and the Antonines.'

'A court would be rather dull without a woman at its head.'

'On the contrary,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine. 'It was Louis Quatorze who made the court; not his queen.'

'Well,' said Waldershare, 'all the same, I fear King Florestan will adopt no one in this room, though he has several friends here, and I am one; and I believe that he will marry, and I cannot help fancying the partner of his throne will not be as insignificant as Louis the Fourteenth's wife, or Catherine of Braganza.'

Jawett dined this day with Mr. Bertie Tremaine. He was a frequent guest there, and still was the editor of the 'Precursor,' though it sometimes baffled all that lucidity of style for which he was celebrated to reconcile the conduct of the party, of which the 'Precursor' was alike the oracle and organ, with the opinions with which that now well-established journal first attempted to direct and illuminate the public mind. It seemed to the editor that the 'Precursor' dwelt more on the past than became a harbinger of the future. Not that Mr. Bertie Tremaine ever for

a moment admitted that there was any difficulty in any case. He never permitted any dogmas that he had ever enunciated to be surrendered, however contrary at their first aspect.

'All are but parts of one stupendous whole,'

and few things were more interesting than the conferences in which Mr. Bertie Tremaine had to impart his views and instructions to the master of that lucid style, which had the merit of making everything so very clear when the master himself was, as at present, extremely perplexed and confused. Jawett lingered after the other guests, that he might have the advantage of consulting the great leader on the course which he ought to take in advocating a measure which seemed completely at variance with all the principles they had ever upheld.

'I do not see your difficulty,' wound up the host. 'Your case is clear. You have a principle which will carry you through everything. That is the charm of a principle. You have always an answer ready.'

'But in this case,' somewhat timidly inquired Mr. Jawett, 'what would be the principle on which I should rest?'

'You must show,' said Mr. Bertie Tremaine, 'that democracy is aristocracy in disguise; and that aristocracy is democracy in disguise. It will carry you through everything.'

Even Jawett looked a little amazed.

'But'— he was beginning, when Mr. Bertie Tremaine arose. 'Think of what I have said, and if on reflection any doubt or difficulty remain in your mind, call on me to-morrow before I go to the House. At present, I must pay my respects to Lady Beaumaris. She is the only woman the Tories can boast of; but she is a first-rate woman, and is a power which I must secure.'

CHAPTER XCII.

A MONTH had nearly elapsed since the Montfort ball; the season was over and the session was nearly finished. The pressure of parliamentary life for those in office is extreme during this last month, yet Endymion would have contrived, were it only for a day, to have visited his sister, had Lady Roehampton much encouraged his appearance. Strange as it seemed to him, she did not, but, on the contrary, always assumed that the prorogation of parliament would alone bring them together again. When he proposed on one occasion to come down for four-and-twenty hours, she absolutely, though with much affection, adjourned the fulfilment of the offer. It seemed that she was not yet quite settled.

Lady Montfort lingered in London even after Goodwood. She was rather embarrassed, as she told Endymion, about her future plans. Lord Montfort was at Princedown, where she wished to join him, but he did not respond to her wishes; on the contrary, while announcing that he was indisposed, and meant to remain at Princedown for the summer, he suggested that she should avail herself of the opportunity, and pay a long visit to her family in the north. 'I know what he means,' she observed; 'he wants the world to believe that we are separated. He cannot repudiate me—he is too great a gentleman to do anything coarsely unjust; but he thinks, by tact and indirect means, he may attain our virtual separation. He has had this purpose for years, I believe now ever since our marriage, but hitherto I have baffled him. I ought to be with him; I really believe he is indisposed, his face has become so pale of late; but were I to persist in going to Princedown I should only drive him away. He would go off in the night without leaving his address, and something would happen—dreadful or absurd. What I had best do, I think, is this. You are going at last to pay your visit to your sister; I will write to my lord and tell him that as he does not wish me to go to Princedown, I

propose to go to Montfort Castle. When the flag is flying at Montfort, I can pay a visit of any length to my family. It will only be a neighbouring visit from Montfort to them; perhaps, too, they might return it. At any rate, then they cannot say my lord and I are separated. We need not live under the same roof, but so long as I live under his roof the world considers us united. It is a pity to have to scheme in this manner, and rather degrading, particularly when one might be so happy with him. But you know, my dear Endymion, all about our affairs. Your friend is not a very happy woman, and if not a very unhappy one, it is owing much to your dear friendship, and a little to my own spirit which keeps me up under what is frequent and sometimes bitter mortification. And now adieu! I suppose you cannot be away less than a week. Probably on your return you will find me here. I cannot go to Montfort without his permission. But he will give it. I observe that he will always do anything to gain his immediate object. His immediate object is, that I shall not go to Princedown, and so he will agree that I shall go to Montfort.'

For the first time in his life, Endymion felt some constraint in the presence of Myra. There was something changed in her manner. No diminution of affection, for she threw her arms around him and pressed him to her heart; and then she looked at him anxiously, even sadly, and kissed both his eyes, and then she remained for some moments in silence with her face hid on his shoulder. Never since the loss of Lord Roehampton had she seemed so subdued.

'It is a long separation,' she at length said, with a voice and smile equally faint, 'and you must be a little wearied with your travelling. Come and refresh yourself, and then I will show you my boudoir I have made here; rather pretty, out of nothing. And then we will sit down and have a long talk together, for I have much to tell you, and I want your advice.'

'She is going to marry Sidney Wilton,' thought Endymion; 'that is clear.'

The boudoir was really pretty, 'made out of nothing;' a gay chintz, some shelves of beautiful books, some fanciful chairs, and a portrait of Lord Roehampton.

It was a long interview, very long, and if one could judge by the countenance of Endymion, when he quitted the boudoir and hastened to his room, of grave import. Sometimes his face was pale, sometimes scarlet; the changes were rapid, but the expression was agitated rather than one of gratification.

He sent instantly for his servant, and then penned this telegram to Lady Montfort: 'My visit here will be short. I am to see you immediately. Nothing must prevent your being at home when I call to-morrow, about four o'clock. Most, most important.'

CHAPTER XCIII.

'Well, something has happened at last,' said Lady Montfort with a wondering countenance; 'it is too marvellous!'

'She goes to Osborne to-day,' continued Endymion, 'and I suppose after that, in due course, it will be generally known. I should think the formal announcement would be made abroad. It has been kept wonderfully close. She wished you to know it first, at least from her. I do not think she ever hesitated about accepting him. There was delay from various causes; whether there should be a marriage by proxy first in this country, and other points; about religion, for example.'

'Well?'

'She enters the Catholic Church, the Archbishop of Tyre has received her. There is no difficulty and no great ceremonies in such matters. She was re-baptized, but only by way of precaution. It was not necessary, for our baptism, you know, is recognised by Rome.'

'And that was all!'

'All, with a first communion and confession. It is all consummated now; as you say, "It is too wonderful." A first confession, and to Nigel Penruddock, who says life is flat and insipid!'

'I shall write to her: I must write to her. I wonder if I shall see her before she departs.'

'That is certain if you wish it; she wishes it.'

'And when does she go? And who goes with her?'

'She will be under my charge,' said Endymion. 'It is fortunate that it should happen at a time when I am free. I am personally to deliver her to the king. The Duke of St. Angelo, Baron Sergius, and the archbishop accompany her, and Waldershare, at the particular request of his Majesty.'

'And no lady?'

'She takes Adriana with her.'

'Adriana!' repeated Lady Montfort, and a cloud passed over her brow. There was a momentary pause, and then Lady Montfort said, 'I wish she would take me.'

'That would be delightful,' said Endymion, 'and most becoming—to have for a companion the greatest lady of our court.'

'She will not take me with her,' said Lady Montfort, sorrowfully but decisively, and shaking her head. 'Dear woman! I loved her always, often most when I seemed least affectionate—but there was between us something'—and she hesitated. 'Heigho! I may be the greatest lady of our court, but I am a very unhappy woman, Endymion, and what annoys and dispirits me most, sometimes quite breaks me down, is that I cannot see that I deserve my lot.'

It happened as Endymion foresaw; the first announcement came from abroad. King Florestan suddenly sent a message to his parliament, that his Majesty was about to present them with a queen. She was not the daughter of a reigning house, but she came from the land of freedom and political wisdom, and from the purest and most powerful court in Europe. His subjects soon learnt that she was the most beautiful of women, for the portrait of the Countess of Roehampton, as it were by magic, seemed suddenly to fill every window in every shop in the teeming and brilliant capital where she was about to reign.

It was convenient that these great events should occur when everybody was out of town. Lady Montfort alone remained,

the frequent, if not constant, companion of the new sovereign. Berengaria soon recovered her high spirits. There was much to do and prepare in which her hints and advice were invaluable. Though she was not to have the honour of attending Myra to her new home, which, considering her high place in the English court, was perhaps hardly consistent with etiquette, for so she now cleverly put it, she was to pay her Majesty a visit in due time. The momentary despondency that had clouded her brilliant countenance had not only disappeared, but she had quite forgotten, and certainly would not admit, that she was anything but the most sanguine and energetic of beings, and rallied Endymion unmercifully for his careworn countenance and too frequent air of depression. The truth is, the great change that was impending was one which might well make him serious, and sometimes sad.

The withdrawal of a female influence, so potent on his life as that of his sister, was itself a great event. There had been between them from the cradle, which, it may be said, they had shared, a strong and perfect sympathy. They had experienced together vast and strange vicissitudes of life. Though much separated in his early youth, there had still been a constant interchange of thought and feeling between them. For the last twelve years or so, ever since Myra had become acquainted with the Neuchatel family, they may be said never to have separated —at least they had maintained a constant communication, and generally a personal one. She had in a great degree moulded his life. Her unfaltering, though often unseen, influence had created his advancement. Her will was more powerful than his. He was more prudent and plastic. He felt this keenly. He was conscious that, left to himself, he would probably have achieved much less. He remembered her words when they parted for the first time at Hurstley, 'Women will be your best friends in life.' And that brought his thoughts to the only subject on which they had ever differed—her wished-for union between himself and Adriana. He felt he had crossed her there—that he had prevented the fulfilment of her deeply-matured plans. Perhaps, had that marriage taken place, she would never have quitted England. Perhaps; but was that desirable? Was

it not fitter that so lofty a spirit should find a seat as exalted as her capacity? Myra was a sovereign! In this age of strange events, not the least strange. No petty cares and griefs must obtrude themselves in such majestic associations. And yet the days at Hainault were very happy, and the bright visits to Gaydene, and her own pleasant though stately home. His heart was agitated, and his eyes were often moistened with emotion. He seemed to think that all the thrones of Christendom could be no compensation for the loss of this beloved genius of his life, whom he might never see again. Sometimes, when he paid his daily visit to Berengaria, she who knew him by heart, who studied every expression of his countenance and every tone of his voice, would say to him, after a few minutes of desultory and feeble conversation, 'You are thinking of your sister, Endymion?'

He did not reply, but gave a sort of faint mournful smile.

'This separation is a trial, a severe one, and I knew you would feel it,' said Lady Montfort. 'I feel it; I loved your sister, but she did not love me. Nobody that I love ever does love me.'

'Oh! do not say that, Lady Montfort.'

'It is what I feel. I cannot console you. There is nothing I can do for you. My friendship, if you value it, which I will not doubt you do, you fully possessed before your sister was a Queen. So that goes for nothing.'

'I must say, I feel sometimes most miserable.'

'Nonsense, Endymion; if anything could annoy your sister more than another, it would be to hear of such feelings on your part. I must say she has courage. She has found her fitting place. Her brother ought to do the same. You have a great object in life, at least you had, but I have no faith in sentimentalists. If I had been sentimental, I should have gone into a convent long ago.'

'If to feel is to be sentimental, I cannot help it.'

'All feeling which has no object to attain is morbid and maudlin,' said Lady Montfort. 'You say you are very miserable, and at the same time you do not know what you want. Would you have your sister dethroned? And if you would,

could you accomplish your purpose? Well, then, what nonsense to think about her except to feel proud of her elevation, and prouder still that she is equal to it!'

'You always have the best of every argument,' said Endymion.

'Of course,' said Lady Montfort. 'What I want you to do is to exert yourself. You have now a strong social position, for Sidney Wilton tells me the Queen has relinquished to you her mansion and the whole of her income, which is no mean one. You must collect your friends about you. Our government is not too strong, I can tell you. We must brush up in the recess. What with Mr. Bertie Tremaine and his friends joining the Protectionists, and the ultra-Radicals wanting, as they always do, something impossible, I see seeds of discomfiture unless they are met with energy. You stand high, and are well spoken of even by our opponents. Whether we stand or fall, it is a moment for you to increase your personal influence. That is the element now to encourage in your career, because you are not like the old fogies in the cabinet, who, if they go out, will never enter another again. You have a future, and though you may not be an emperor, you may be what I esteem more, prime minister of this country.'

'You are always so sanguine.'

'Not more sanguine than your sister. Often we have talked of this. I wish she were here to help us, but I will do my part. At present let us go to luncheon.'

CHAPTER XCIV.

THERE was a splendid royal yacht, though not one belonging to our gracious Sovereign, lying in one of Her Majesty's southern ports, and the yacht was convoyed by a smart frigate. The crews were much ashore, and were very popular, for they spent a great deal of money. Everybody knew what was the purpose

of their bright craft, and every one was interested in it. A beautiful Englishwoman had been selected to fill a foreign and brilliant throne occupied by a prince, who had been educated in our own country, who ever avowed his sympathies with 'the inviolate island of the sage and free.' So in fact there was some basis for the enthusiasm which was felt on this occasion by the inhabitants of Nethampton. What every one wanted to know was when she would sail. Ah! that was a secret, still a secret that could hardly be kept for the eight-and-forty hours preceding her departure, and therefore, one day, with no formal notice, all the inhabitants of Nethampton were in gala; streets and ships dressed out with the flags of all nations; the church bells ringing; and busy little girls running about with huge bouquets.

At the very instant expected, the special train was signalled, and drove into the crimson station amid the thunder of artillery, the blare of trumpets, the beating of drums, and cheers from thousands even louder and longer than the voices of the cannon. Leaning on the arm of her brother, and attended by the Princess of Montserrat, and the Honourable Adriana Neuchatel, Baron Sergius, the Duke of St. Angelo, the Archbishop of Tyre, and Lord Waldershare, the daughter of William Ferrars, gracious, yet looking as if she were born to empire, received the congratulatory address of the mayor and corporation and citizens of Nethampton, and permitted her hand to be kissed, not only by his worship, but by at least two aldermen.

They were on the waters, and the shores of Albion, fast fading away, had diminished to a speck. It is a melancholy and tender moment, and Myra was in her ample and splendid cabin and alone. 'It is a trial,' she felt, 'but all that I love and value in this world are in this vessel,' and she thought of Endymion and Adriana. The gentlemen were on deck, chiefly smoking or reconnoitring their convoy through their telescopes.

'I must say,' said Waldershare, 'it was a grand idea of our kings making themselves sovereigns of the sea. The greater portion of this planet is water; so we at once became a first-rate power. We owe our navy entirely to the Stuarts. King

James the Second was the true founder and hero of the British navy. He was the worthy son of his admirable father, that blessed martyr, the restorer at least, if not the inventor, of ship money; the most patriotic and popular tax that ever was devised by man. The Nonconformists thought themselves so wise in resisting it, and they have got the naval estimates instead!'

The voyage was propitious, the weather delightful, and when they had entered the southern waters Waldershare confessed that he felt the deliciousness of life. If the scene and the impending events, and their own fair thoughts, had not been adequate to interest them, there were ample resources at their command; all the ladies were skilled musicians, their concerts commenced at sunset, and the sweetness of their voices long lingered over the moonlit waters.

Adriana, one evening, bending over the bulwarks of the yacht, was watching the track of phosphoric light, struck into brilliancy from the dark blue waters by the prow of their rapid vessel. 'It is a fascinating sight, Miss Neuchatel, and it seems one might gaze on it for ever.'

'Ah! Lord Waldershare, you caught me in a reverie.'

'What more sweet?'

'Well, that depends on its subject. To tell the truth, I was thinking that these lights resembled a little your conversation; all the wondrous things you are always saying or telling us.'

The archbishop was a man who never recurred to the past. One never could suppose that Endymion and himself had been companions in their early youth, or, so far as their intercourse was concerned, that there was such a place in the world as Hurstley. One night, however, as they were pacing the deck together, he took the arm of Endymion, and said, 'I trace the hand of Providence in every incident of your sister's life. What we deemed misfortunes, sorrows, even calamities, were forming a character originally endowed with supreme will, and destined for the highest purposes. There was a moment at Hurstley when I myself was crushed to the earth, and cared not to live; vain, short-sighted mortal! Our great Master was

at that moment shaping everything to His ends, and preparing for the entrance into His Church of a woman who may be, who will be, I believe, another St. Helena.'

'We have not spoken of this subject before,' said Endymion, 'and I should not have cared had our silence continued, but I must now tell you frankly, the secession of my sister from the Church of her fathers was to me by no means a matter of unmixed satisfaction.'

'The time will come when you will recognise it as the consummation of a Divine plan,' said the archbishop.

'I feel great confidence that my sister will never be the slave of superstition,' said Endymion. 'Her mind is too masculine for that; she will remember that the throne she fills has been already once lost by the fatal influence of the Jesuits.'

'The influence of the Jesuits is the influence of Divine truth,' said his companion. 'And how is it possible for such influence not to prevail? What you treat as defeats, discomfitures, are events which you do not comprehend. They are incidents all leading to one great end—the triumph of the Church—that is, the triumph of God.'

'I will not decide what are great ends; I am content to ascertain what is wise conduct. And it would not be wise conduct, in my opinion, for the King to rest upon the Jesuits.'

'The Jesuits never fell except from conspiracy against them. It is never the public voice that demands their expulsion or the public effort that accomplishes it. It is always the affair of sovereigns and statesmen, of politicians, of men, in short, who feel that there is a power at work, and that power one not favourable to their schemes or objects of government.'

'Well, we shall see,' said Endymion; 'I candidly tell you, I hope the Jesuits will have as little influence in my brother-in-law's kingdom as in my own country.'

'As little!' said Nigel, somewhat sarcastically; 'I should be almost content if the holy order in every country had as much influence as they now have in England.'

'I think your Grace exaggerates.'

'Before two years are past,' said the archbishop, speaking

very slowly, 'I foresee that the Jesuits will be privileged in England, and the hierarchy of our Church recognised.'

It was a delicious afternoon; it had been sultry, but the sun had now greatly declined, when the captain of the yacht came down to announce to the Queen that they were in sight of her new country, and she hastened on deck to behold the rapidly nearing shore. A squadron of ships of war had stood out to meet her, and in due time the towers and spires of a beautiful city appeared, which was the port of the capital, and itself almost worthy of being one. A royal barge, propelled by four-and-twenty rowers, and bearing the lord chamberlain, awaited the queen, and the moment her Majesty and the Princess of Montserrat had taken their seats, salutes thundered from every ship of war, responded to by fort and battery ashore.

When they landed, they were conducted by chief officers of the court to a pavilion which faced the western sky, now glowing like an opal with every shade of the iris, and then becoming of a light green colour varied only by some slight clouds burnished with gold. A troop of maidens brought flowers as bright as themselves, and then a company of pages advanced, and kneeling, offered to the Queen chocolate in a crystal cup.

According to the programme drawn up by the heralds, and every tittle of it founded on precedents, the King and the royal carriages were to have met the travellers on their arrival at the metropolis; but there are feelings which heralds do not comprehend, and which defy precedents. Suddenly there was a shout, a loud cheer, a louder salute. Some one had arrived unexpectedly. A young man, stately but pale, moved through the swiftly receding crowd, alone and unattended, entered the pavilion, advanced to the Queen, kissed her hand, and then both her cheeks, just murmuring, 'My best beloved, this, this indeed is joy.'

The capital was fortified, and the station was without the walls; here the royal carriages awaited them. The crowd was immense; the ramparts on this occasion were covered with people. It was an almost sultry night, with every star visible, and clear and warm and sweet. As the royal carriage crossed

the drawbridge and entered the chief gates, the whole city was in an instant suddenly illuminated—in a flash. The architectural lines of the city walls, and of every street, were indicated, and along the ramparts at not distant intervals were tripods, each crowned with a silver flame, which cast around the radiance of day.

He held and pressed her hand as in silence she beheld the wondrous scene. They had to make a progress of some miles; the way was kept throughout by soldiery and civic guards, while beyond them was an infinite population, all cheering and many of them waving torches. They passed through many streets, and squares with marvellous fountains, until they arrived at the chief and royal street, which has no equal in the world. It is more than a mile long, never swerving from a straight line, broad, yet the houses so elevated that they generally furnish the shade this ardent clime requires. The architecture of this street is so varied that it never becomes monotonous, some beautiful church, or palace, or ministerial hotel perpetually varying the effect. All the windows were full on this occasion, and even the roofs were crowded. Every house was covered with tapestry, and the line of every building was marked out by artificial light. The moon rose, but she was not wanted; it was as light as day.

They were considerate enough not to move too rapidly through this heart of the metropolis, and even halted at some stations, where bands of music and choirs of singers welcomed and celebrated them. They moved on more quickly afterwards, made their way through a pretty suburb, and then entered a park. At the termination of a long avenue was the illumined and beautiful palace of the Prince of Montserrat, where Myra was to reside and repose until the momentous morrow, when King Florestan was publicly to place on the brow of his affianced bride the crown which to his joy she had consented to share.

CHAPTER XCV.

THERE are very few temperaments that can resist an universal and unceasing festival in a vast and beautiful metropolis. It is inebriating, and the most wonderful of all its accidents is how the population can ever calm and recur to the monotony of ordinary life. When all this happens, too, in a capital blessed with purple skies, where the moonlight is equal to our sunshine, and where half the population sleep in the open air and wish for no roof but the heavens, existence is a dream of phantasy and perpetual loveliness, and one is at last forced to believe that there is some miraculous and supernatural agency that provides the ever-enduring excitement and ceaseless incidents of grace and beauty.

After the great ceremony of the morrow in the cathedral, and when Myra, kneeling at the altar with her husband, received, under a canopy of silver brocade, the blessings of a cardinal and her people, day followed day with court balls and municipal banquets, state visits to operas, and reviews of sumptuous troops. At length the end of all this pageantry and enthusiasm approached, and amid a blaze of fireworks, the picturesque population of this fascinating city tried to return to ordinary feeling and to common sense.

If amid this graceful hubbub and this glittering riot any one could have found time to remark the carriage and conduct of an individual, one might have observed, and perhaps been surprised at, the change in those of Miss Neuchatel. That air of pensive resignation which distinguished her seemed to have vanished. She never wore that doleful look for which she was too remarkable in London saloons, and which marred a countenance favoured by nature and a form intended for gaiety and grace. Perhaps it was the influence of the climate, perhaps the excitement of the scene, perhaps some rapture with the wondrous fortunes of the friend whom she adored, but Adriana seemed suddenly to sympathise with everybody and to appreciate every-

thing; her face was radiant, she was in every dance, and visited churches and museums, and palaces and galleries, with keen delight. With many charms, the intimate friend of their sovereign, and herself known to be noble and immensely rich, Adriana became the fashion, and a crowd of princes were ever watching her smiles, and sometimes offering her their sighs.

'I think you enjoy our visit more than any one of us,' said Endymion to her one day, with some feeling of surprise.

'Well, one cannot mope for ever,' said Miss Neuchatel; 'I have passed my life in thinking of one subject, and I feel now it made me very stupid.'

Endymion felt embarrassed, and, though generally ready, had no repartee at command. Lord Waldershare, however, came to his relief, and claimed Adriana for the impending dance.

This wondrous marriage was a grand subject for 'our own correspondents,' and they abounded. Among them were Jawett and St. Barbe. St. Barbe hated Jawett, as indeed he did all his brethren, but his appointment in this instance he denounced as an infamous job. 'Merely to allow him to travel in foreign parts, which he has never done, without a single qualification for the office! However, it will ruin his paper, that is some consolation. Fancy sending here a man who has never used his pen except about those dismal statistics, and what he calls first principles! I hate his style, so neat and frigid. No colour, sir. I hate his short sentences, like a dog barking; we want a word-painter here, sir. My description of the wedding sold one hundred and fifty thousand, and it is selling now. If the proprietors were gentlemen, they would have sent me an unlimited credit, instead of their paltry fifty pounds a day and my expenses; but you never meet a liberal man now,—no such animal known. What I want you to do for me, Lord Waldershare, is to get me invited to the Villa Aurea when the court moves there. It will be private life there, and that is the article the British public want now. They are satiated with ceremonies and festivals. They want to know what the royal pair have for dinner when they are alone, how they pass their evenings, and whether the queen drives ponies'

'So far as I am concerned,' said Waldershare, 'they shall remain state secrets.'

'I have received no special favours here,' rejoined St. Barbe, 'though, with my claims, I might have counted on the uttermost. However, it is always so. I must depend on my own resources. I have a retainer, I can tell you, my lord, from the "Rigdum Funidos," in my pocket, and it is in my power to keep up such a crackling of jokes and sarcasms that a very different view would soon be entertained in Europe of what is going on here than is now the fashion. The "Rigdum Funidos" is on the breakfast-table of all England, and sells thousands in every capital of the world. You do not appreciate its power; you will now feel it.'

'I also am a subscriber to the "Rigdum Funidos,"' said Waldershare, 'and tell you frankly, Mr. St. Barbe, that if I see in its columns the slightest allusion to any person or incident in this country, I will take care that you be instantly consigned to the galleys; and, this being a liberal government, I can do that without even the ceremony of a primary inquiry.'

'You do not mean that?' said St. Barbe; 'of course, I was only jesting. It is not likely that I should say or do anything disagreeable to those whom I look upon as my patrons—I may say friends—through life. It makes me almost weep when I remember my early connection with Mr. Ferrars, now an under-secretary of state, and who will mount higher. I never had a chance of being a minister, though I suppose I am not more incapable than others who get the silver spoon into their mouths. And then his divine sister! Quite an heroic character! I never had a sister, and so I never had even the chance of being nearly related to royalty. But so it has been throughout my life. No luck, my lord; no luck. And then they say one is misanthropical. Hang it! who can help being misanthropical when he finds everybody getting on in life except himself?'

The court moved to their favourite summer residence, a Palladian palace on a blue lake, its banks clothed with forests abounding with every species of game, and beyond them loftier

mountains. The king was devoted to sport, and Endymion was always among his companions. Waldershare rather attached himself to the ladies, who made gay parties floating in gondolas, and refreshed themselves with picnics in sylvan retreats. It was supposed Lord Waldershare was a great admirer of the Princess of Montserrat, who in return referred to him as that 'lovable eccentricity.' As the autumn advanced, parties of guests of high distinction, carefully arranged, periodically arrived. Now, there was more ceremony, and every evening the circle was formed, while the king and queen exchanged words, and sometimes ideas, with those who were so fortunate as to be under their roof. Frequently there were dramatic performances, and sometimes a dance. The Princess of Montserrat was invaluable in these scenes; vivacious, imaginative, a consummate mimic, her countenance, though not beautiful, was full of charm. What was strange, Adriana took a great fancy to her Highness, and they were seldom separated. The only cloud for Endymion in this happy life was, that every day the necessity of his return to England was more urgent, and every day the days vanished more quickly. That return to England, once counted by weeks, would soon be counted by hours. He had conferred once or twice with Waldershare on the subject, who always turned the conversation; at last Endymion reminded him that the time of his departure was at hand, and that, originally, it had been agreed they should return together.

'Yes, my dear Ferrars, we did so agree, but the agreement was permissive, not compulsory. My views are changed. Perhaps I shall never return to England again; I think of being naturalised here.'

The queen was depressed at the prospect of being separated from her brother. Sometimes she remonstrated with him for his devotion to sport which deprived her of his society; frequently in a morning she sent for him to her boudoir, that they might talk together as in old times. 'The king has invited Lord and Lady Beaumaris to pay us a visit, and they are coming at once. I had hoped the dear Hainaults might have visited us here. I think she would have liked it. However, they will

certainly pass the winter with us. It is some consolation to me not to lose Adriana.'

'The greatest,' said Endymion, 'and she seems so happy here. She seems quite changed.'

'I hope she is happier,' said the queen, 'but I trust she is not changed. I think her nearly perfection. So pure, even so exalted a mind, joined with so sweet a temper, I have never met. And she is very much admired too, I can tell you. The Prince of Arragon would be on his knees to her to-morrow, if she would only give a single smile. But she smiles enough with the Princess of Montserrat. I heard her the other day absolutely in uncontrollable laughter. That is a strange friendship; it amuses me.'

'The princess has immense resource.'

The queen suddenly rose from her seat; her countenance was disturbed.

'Why do we talk of her, or of any other trifler of the court, when there hangs over us so great a sorrow, Endymion, as our separation? Endymion, my best beloved,' and she threw her arms round his neck, 'my heart! my life! Is it possible that you can leave me, and so miserable as I am?'

'Miserable!'

'Yes! miserable when I think of your position—and even my own. Mine own has risen like a palace in a dream, and may vanish like one. But that would not be a calamity if you were safe. If I quitted this world to-morrow, where would you be? It gives me sleepless nights and anxious days. If you really loved me as you say, you would save me this. I am haunted with the perpetual thought that all this glittering prosperity will vanish as it did with our father. God forbid that, under any circumstances, it should lead to such an end—but who knows? Fate is terribly stern; ironically just. O Endymion! if you really love me, your twin, half of your blood and life, who have laboured for you so much, and thought for you so much, and prayed for you so much—and yet I sometimes feel have done so little—O Endymion! my adored, my own Endymion, if you wish to preserve my life—if you wish me not only to live, but

really to be happy as I ought to be and could be, but for one dark thought, help me, aid me, save me—you can, and by one single act.'

'One single act!'

'Yes! marry Adriana.'

'Ah!' and he sighed.

'Yes, Adriana, to whom we both of us owe everything. Were it not for Adriana, you would not be here, you would be nothing,' and she whispered some words which made him start, and alternately blush and look pale.

'Is it possible?' he exclaimed. 'My sister, my beloved sister, I have tried to keep my brain cool in many trials. But I feel, as it were, as if life were too much for me. You counsel me to that which we should all repent.'

'Yes, I know it; you may for a moment think it a sacrifice, but believe me, that is all phantasy. I know you think your heart belongs to another. I will grant everything, willingly grant everything you could say of her. Yes, I admit, she is beautiful, she has many charms, has been to you a faithful friend, you delight in her society; such things have happened before to many men, to every man they say they happen, but that has not prevented them from being wise, and very happy too. Your present position, if you persist in it, is one most perilous. You have no root in the country; but for an accident you could not maintain the public position you have nobly gained. As for the great crowning consummation of your life, which we dreamed over at unhappy Hurstley, which I have sometimes dared to prophesy, that must be surrendered. The country at the best will look upon you only as a reputable adventurer to be endured, even trusted and supported, in some secondary post, but nothing more. I touch on this, for I see it is useless to speak of myself and my own fate and feelings; only remember, Endymion, I have never deceived you. I cannot endure any longer this state of affairs. When in a few days we part, we shall never meet again. And all the devotion of Myra will end in your destroying her.'

'My own, my beloved Myra, do with me what you like. If ——'

At this moment there was a gentle tap at the door, and the king entered.

'My angel,' he said, 'and you too, my dear Endymion. I have some news from England which I fear may distress you. Lord Montfort is dead.'

CHAPTER XCVI.

There was ever, when separated, an uninterrupted correspondence between Berengaria and Endymion. They wrote to each other every day, so that when they met again there was no void in their lives and mutual experience, and each was acquainted with almost every feeling and incident that had been proved, or had occurred, since they parted. The startling news, however, communicated by the king had not previously reached Endymion, because he was on the eve of his return to England, and his correspondents had been requested to direct their future letters to his residence in London.

His voyage home was an agitated one, and not sanguine or inspiriting. There was a terrible uncertainty in the future. What were the feelings of Lady Montfort towards himself? Friendly, kind, affectionate, in a certain sense, even devoted, no doubt; but all consistent with a deep and determined friendship which sought and wished for no return more ardent. But now she was free. Yes, but would she again forfeit her freedom? And if she did, would it not be to attain some great end, probably the great end of her life? Lady Montfort was a woman of far-reaching ambition. In a certain degree, she had married to secure her lofty aims; and yet it was only by her singular energy, and the playfulness and high spirit of her temperament, that the sacrifice had not proved a failure; her success, however, was limited, for the ally on whom she had counted rarely assisted and never sympathised with her. It was true she admired and even loved her husband; her vanity, which

was not slight, was gratified by her conquest of one whom it had seemed no one could subdue, and who apparently placed at her feet all the power and magnificence which she appreciated.

Poor Endymion, who loved her passionately, over whom she exercised the influence of a divinity, who would do nothing without consulting her, and who was moulded, and who wished to be moulded, in all his thoughts and feelings, and acts, and conduct, by her inspiring will, was also a shrewd man of the world, and did not permit his sentiment to cloud his perception of life and its doings. He felt that Lady Montfort had fallen from a lofty position, and she was not of a temperament that would quietly brook her fate. Instead of being the mistress of castles and palaces, with princely means, and all the splendid accidents of life at her command, she was now a dowager with a jointure! Still young, with her charms unimpaired, heightened even by the maturity of her fascinating qualities, would she endure this? She might retain her friendship for one who, as his sister ever impressed upon him, had no root in the land, and even that friendship, he felt conscious, must yield much of its entireness and intimacy to the influence of new ties; but for their lives ever being joined together, as had sometimes been his wild dream, his cheek, though alone, burned with the consciousness of his folly and self-deception.

'He is one of our rising statesmen,' whispered the captain of the vessel to a passenger, as Endymion, silent, lonely, and absorbed, walked, as was his daily custom, the quarterdeck. 'I daresay he has a good load on his mind. Do you know, I would sooner be a captain of a ship than a minister of state?'

Poor Endymion! Yes, he bore his burthen, but it was not secrets of state that overwhelmed him. If his mind for a moment quitted the contemplation of Lady Montfort, it was only to encounter the recollection of a heart-rending separation from his sister, and his strange and now perplexing relations with Adriana.

Lord Montfort had passed the summer, as he had announced, at Princedown, and alone; that is to say, without Lady Mont-

fort. She wrote to him frequently, and if she omitted doing so for a longer interval than usual, he would indite to her a little note, always courteous, sometimes even almost kind, reminding her that her letters amused him, and that of late they had been rarer than he wished. Lady Montfort herself made Montfort Castle her home, paying sometimes a visit to her family in the neighbourhood, and sometimes receiving them and other guests. Lord Montfort himself did not live in absolute solitude. He had society always at command. He always had a court about him; equerries, and secretaries, and doctors, and odd and amusing men whom they found out for him, and who were well pleased to find themselves in his beautiful and magnificent Princedown, wandering in woods and parks and pleasaunces, devouring his choice *entrées*, and quaffing his curious wines. Sometimes he dined with them, sometimes a few dined with him, sometimes he was not seen for weeks; but whether he were visible or not, he was the subject of constant thought and conversation by all under his roof.

Lord Montfort, it may be remembered, was a great fisherman. It was the only sport which retained a hold upon him. The solitude, the charming scenery, and the requisite skill, combined to please him. He had a love for nature, and he gratified it in this pursuit. His domain abounded in those bright chalky streams which the trout love. He liked to watch the moor-hens, too, and especially a kingfisher.

Lord Montfort came home late one day after much wading. It had been a fine day for anglers, soft and not too bright, and he had been tempted to remain long in the water. He drove home rapidly, but it was in an open carriage, and when the sun set there was a cold autumnal breeze. He complained at night, and said he had been chilled. There was always a doctor under the roof, who felt his patient's pulse, ordered the usual remedies, and encouraged him. Lord Montfort passed a bad night, and his physician in the morning found fever, and feared there were symptoms of pleurisy. He prescribed accordingly, but summoned from town two great authorities. The great authorities did not arrive until the next day. They approved of everything that

had been done, but shook their heads. 'No immediate danger, but serious.'

Four-and-twenty hours afterwards they inquired of Lord Montfort whether they should send for his wife. 'On no account whatever,' he replied. 'My orders on this head are absolute.' Nevertheless, they did send for Lady Montfort, and as there was even then a telegraph to the north, Berengaria, who departed from her castle instantly, and travelled all night, arrived in eight-and-forty hours at Princedown. The state of Lord Montfort then was critical.

It was broken to Lord Montfort that his wife had arrived.

'I perceive then,' he replied, 'that I am going to die, because I am disobeyed.'

These were the last words he uttered. He turned in his bed as it were to conceal his countenance, and expired without a sigh or sound.

There was not a single person at Princedown in whom Lady Montfort could confide. She had summoned the family solicitor, but he could not arrive until the next day, and until he came she insisted that none of her late lord's papers should be touched. She at first thought he had made a will, because otherwise all his property would go to his cousin, whom he particularly hated, and yet on reflection she could hardly fancy his making a will. It was a trouble to him—a disagreeable trouble; and there was nobody she knew whom he would care to benefit. He was not a man who would leave anything to hospitals and charities. Therefore, on the whole, she arrived at the conclusion he had not made a will, though all the guests at Princedown were of a different opinion, and each was calculating the amount of his own legacy.

At last the lawyer arrived, and he brought the will with him. It was very short, and not very recent. Everything he had in the world except the settled estates, Montfort Castle and Montfort House, he bequeathed to his wife. It was a vast inheritance; not only Princedown, but great accumulations of personal property, for Lord Montfort was fond of amassing, and admired the sweet simplicity of the three per cents.

CHAPTER XCVII.

When Endymion arrived in London he found among his letters two brief notes from Lady Montfort; one hurriedly written at Montfort Castle at the moment of her departure, and another from Princedown, with these words only, 'All is over.' More than a week had elapsed since the last was written, and he had already learnt from the newspapers that the funeral had taken place. It was a painful but still necessary duty to fulfil, to write to her, which he did, but he received no answer to his letter of sympathy, and to a certain degree, of condolence. Time flew on, but he could not venture to write again, and without any absolute cause for his discomfort, he felt harassed and unhappy. He had been so accustomed all his life to exist under the genial influence of women that his present days seemed lone and dark. His sister and Berengaria, two of the most gifted and charming beings in the world, had seemed to agree that their first duty had ever been to sympathise with his fortunes and to aid them. Even his correspondence with Myra was changed. There was a tone of constraint in their communications; perhaps it was the great alteration in her position that occasioned it? His heart assured him that such was not the case. He felt deeply and acutely what was the cause. The subject most interesting to both of them could not be touched on. And then he thought of Adriana, and contrasted his dull and solitary home in Hill Street with what it might have been, graced by her presence, animated by her devotion, and softened by the sweetness of her temper.

Endymion began to feel that the run of his good fortune was dried. His sister, when he had a trouble, would never hear of this; she always held that the misery and calamities of their early years had exhausted the influence of their evil stars, and apparently she had been right, and perhaps she would have always been right had he not been perverse, and thwarted her in the most important circumstances of his life.

In this state of mind, there was nothing for him to do but to plunge into business; and affairs of state are a cure for many cares and sorrows. What are our petty annoyances and griefs when we have to guard the fortunes and the honour of a nation?

The November cabinets had commenced, and this brought all the chiefs to town, Sidney Wilton among them; and his society was always a great pleasure to Endymion; the only social pleasure now left to him was a little dinner at Mr. Wilton's, and little dinners there abounded. Mr. Wilton knew all the persons that he was always thinking about, but whom, it might be noticed, they seemed to agree now rarely to mention. As for the rest, there was nobody to call upon in the delightful hours between official duties and dinner. No Lady Roehampton now, no brilliant Berengaria, not even the gentle Imogene with her welcome smile. He looked in at the Coventry Club, a club of fashion, and also much frequented by diplomatists. There were a good many persons there, and a foreign minister immediately buttonholed the Under-Secretary of State.

'I called at the Foreign Office to-day,' said the foreign minister. 'I assure you it is very pressing.'

'I had the American with me,' said Endymion, 'and he is lengthy. However, as to your business, I think we might talk it over here, and perhaps settle it.' And so they left the room together.

'I wonder what is going to happen to that gentleman,' said Mr. Ormsby, glancing at Endymion, and speaking to Mr. Cassilis.

'Why?' replied Mr. Cassilis, 'is anything up?'

'Will he marry Lady Montfort?'

'Poh!' said Mr. Cassilis.

'You may poh!' said Mr. Ormsby, 'but he was a great favourite.'

'Lady Montfort will never marry. She had always a poodle, and always will have. She was never so *liée* with Ferrars as with the Count of Ferroll, and half a dozen others. She must have a slave.'

'A very good mistress with thirty thousand a year.'

'She has not that,' said Mr. Cassilis doubtingly.

'What do you put Princedown at?' said Mr. Ormsby.

'That I can tell you to a T,' replied Mr. Cassilis, 'for it was offered to me when old Rambrooke died. You will never get twelve thousand a year out of it.'

'Well, I will answer for half a million consols,' said Ormsby, 'for my lawyer, when he made a little investment for me the other day, saw the entry himself in the bank-books; our names are very near, you know—M, and O. Then there is her jointure, something like ten thousand a year.'

'No, no; not seven.'

'Well, that would do.'

'And what is the amount of your little investment in consols altogether, Ormsby?'

'Well, I believe I top Montfort,' said Mr. Ormsby with a complacent smile, 'but then you know, I am not a swell like you; I have no land.'

'Lady Montfort, thirty thousand a year,' said Mr. Cassilis musingly. 'She is only thirty. She is a woman who will set the Thames on fire, but she will never marry. Do you dine to-day, by any chance, with Sidney Wilton?'

When Endymion returned home this evening, he found a letter from Lady Montfort. It was a month since he had written to her. He was so nervous that he absolutely for a moment could not break the seal, and the palpitation of his heart was almost overpowering.

Lady Montfort thanked him for his kind letter, which she ought to have acknowledged before, but she had been very busy—indeed, quite overwhelmed with affairs. She wished to see him, but was sorry she could not ask him down to Princedown, as she was living in complete retirement, only her aunt with her, Lady Gertrude, whom, she believed, he knew. He was aware, probably, how good Lord Montfort had been to her. Sincerely she could say, nothing could have been more unexpected. If she could have seen her husband before the fatal moment, it would have been a consolation to her. He had

always been kind to Endymion; she really believed sometimes that Lord Montfort was even a little attached to him. She should like Endymion to have some souvenir of her late husband. Would he choose something, or would he leave it to her?

One would rather agree, from the tone of this letter, that Mr. Cassilis knew what he was talking about. It fell rather cold on Endymion's heart, and he passed a night of some disquietude; not one of those nights, exactly, when we feel that the end of the world has at length arrived, and that we are the first victim, but a night when you slumber rather than sleep, and wake with the consciousness of some indefinable chagrin.

This was a dull Christmas for Endymion Ferrars. He passed it, as he had passed others, at Gaydene, but what a contrast to the old assemblies there! Every source of excitement that could make existence absolutely fascinating seemed then to unite in his happy fate. Entrancing love and the very romance of domestic affection, and friendships of honour and happiness, and all the charms of an accomplished society, and the feeling of a noble future, and the present and urgent interest in national affairs—all gone, except some ambition which might tend to consequences not more successful than those that had ultimately visited his house with irreparable calamity.

The meeting of parliament was a great relief to Endymion. Besides his office, he had now the House of Commons to occupy him. He was never absent from his place; no little runnings up to Montfort House or Hill Street just to tell them the authentic news, or snatch a hasty repast with furtive delight, with persons still more delightful, and flattering one's self all the time that, so far as absence was concerned, the fleetness of one's gifted brougham horse really made it no difference between Mayfair and Bellamy's.

Endymion had replied, but not very quickly, to Lady Montfort's letter, and he had heard from her again, but her letter requiring no reply, the correspondence had dropped. It was the beginning of March when she wrote to him to say, that she was obliged to come to town to see her lawyer and transact some

business; that she would be 'at papa's in Grosvenor Square,' though the house was shut up, on a certain day, that she much wished to see Endymion, and begged him to call on her.

It was a trying moment when about noon he lifted the knocker in Grosvenor Square. The door was not opened rapidly, and the delay made him more nervous. He almost wished the door would never open. He was shown into a small back room on the ground floor in which was a bookcase, and which chamber, in the language of Grosvenor Square, is called a library.

'Her ladyship will see you presently,' said the servant, who had come up from Princedown.

Endymion was standing before the fire, and as nervous as a man could well be. He sighed, and he sighed more than once. His breathing was oppressed; he felt that life was too short to permit us to experience such scenes and situations. He heard the lock of the door move, and it required all his manliness to endure it.

She entered; she was in weeds, but they became her admirably; her countenance was grave and apparently with an effort to command it. She did not move hurriedly, but held out both her hands to Endymion and retained his, and all without speaking. Her lips then seemed to move, when, rather suddenly, withdrawing her right hand, and placing it on his shoulder and burying her face in her arm, she wept.

He led her soothingly to a seat, and took a chair by her side. Not a word had yet been spoken by either of them; only a murmur of sympathy on the part of Endymion. Lady Montfort spoke first.

'I am weaker than I thought, but it is a great trial.' And then she said how sorry she was, that she could not receive him at Princedown; but she thought it best that he should not go there. 'I have a great deal of business to transact—you would not believe how much. I do not dislike it, it occupies me, it employs my mind. I have led so active a life, that solitude is rather too much for me. Among other business, I must buy a town house, and that is the most difficult of affairs. There never was so great a city with such small houses. I shall feel

the loss of Montfort House, though I never used it half so much as I wished. I want a mansion; I should think you could help me in this. When I return to society, I mean to receive. There must be therefore good reception rooms; if possible, more than good. And now let us talk about our friends. Tell me all about your royal sister, and this new marriage; it rather surprised me, but I think it excellent. Ah! you can keep a secret, but you see it is no use having a secret with me. Even in solitude everything reaches me.'

'I assure you most seriously, that I can annex no meaning to what you are saying.'

'Then I can hardly think it true; and yet it came from high authority, and it was not told me as a real secret.'

'A marriage, and whose?'

'Miss Neuchatel's,—Adriana.'

'And to whom?' inquired Endymion, changing colour.

'To Lord Waldershare.'

'To Lord Waldershare!'

'And has not your sister mentioned it to you?'

'Not a word; it cannot be true.'

'I will give to you my authority,' said Lady Montfort. 'Though I came here in the twilight in a hired brougham, and with a veil, I was caught before I could enter the house by, of all people in the world, Mrs. Rodney. And she told me this in what she called "real confidence," and it was announced to her in a letter from her sister, Lady Beaumaris. They seem all delighted with the match.'

CHAPTER XCVIII.

This marriage of Adriana was not an event calculated to calm the uneasy and dissatisfied temperament of Endymion. The past rendered it impossible that this announcement should not in some degree affect him. Then the silence of his sister on such a subject was too significant; the silence even of Waldershare. Somehow or other, it seemed that all these once dear and devoted friends stood in different relations to him and to each other from what they once filled. They had become more near and intimate together, but he seemed without the pale; he, that Endymion, who once seemed the prime object, if not the centre, of all their thoughts and sentiment. And why was this? What was the influence that had swayed him to a line contrary to what was once their hopes and affections? Had he an evil genius? And was it she? Horrible thought!

The interview with Lady Montfort had been deeply interesting—had for a moment restored him to himself. Had it not been for this news, he might have returned home, soothed, gratified, even again indulging in dreams. But this news had made him ponder; had made him feel what he had lost, and forced him to ask himself what he had gained.

There was one thing he had gained, and that was the privilege of calling on Lady Montfort the next day. That was a fact that sometimes dissipated all the shadows. Under the immediate influence of her presence, he became spell-bound as of yore, and in the intoxication of her beauty, the brightness of her mind, and her ineffable attraction, he felt he would be content with any lot, provided he might retain her kind thoughts and pass much of his life in her society.

She was only staying three or four days in town, and was much engaged in the mornings; but Endymion called on her every afternoon, and sate talking with her till dinner-time, and they both dined very late. As he really on personal and

domestic affairs never could have any reserve with her, he told her, in that complete confidence in which they always indulged, of the extraordinary revelation which his sister had made to him about the parliamentary qualification. Lady Montfort was deeply interested in this; she was even agitated, and looked very grave.

'I am sorry,' she said, 'we know this. Things cannot remain now as they are. You cannot return the money, that would be churlish; besides, you cannot return all the advantages which it gained for you, and they must certainly be considered part of the gift, and the most precious; and then, too, it would betray what your sister rightly called a "sacred confidence." And yet something must be done—you must let me think. Do not mention it again.' And then they talked a little of public affairs. Lady Montfort saw no one, and heard from no one now; but judging from the journals, she thought the position of the government feeble. 'There cannot be a Protectionist government,' she said; 'and yet that is the only parliamentary party of importance. Things will go on till some blow, and perhaps a slight one, will upset you all. And then who is to succeed? I think some queer *mêlange* got up perhaps by Mr. Bertie Tremaine.'

The last day came. She parted from Endymion with kindness, but not with tenderness. He was choking with emotion, and tried to imitate her calmness.

'Am I to write to you?' he asked in a faltering voice.

'Of course you are,' she said, 'every day, and tell me all the news.'

The Hainaults, and the Beaumaris, and Waldershare, did not return to England until some time after Easter. The marriage was to take place in June—Endymion was to be Waldershare's best man. There were many festivities, and he was looked upon as an indispensable guest in all. Adriana received his congratulations with animation, but with affection. She thanked him for a bracelet which he had presented to her; 'I value it more,' she said, 'than all my other presents together, except what dear Waldershare has given to me.' Even with that

exception, the estimate was high, for never a bride in any land ever received the number of splendid offerings which crowded the tables of Lord Hainault's new palace, which he had just built in Park Lane. There was not a Neuchatel in existence, and they flourished in every community, who did not send her, at least, a rivière of brilliants. King Florestan and his queen sent offerings worthy of their resplendent throne and their invaluable friendship. But nothing surpassed, nothing approached, the contents of a casket, which, a day before the wedding, arrived at Hainault House. It came from a foreign land, and Waldershare superintended the opening of the case, and the appearance of a casket of crimson velvet, with genuine excitement. But when it was opened! There was a coronet of brilliants; a necklace of brilliants and emeralds, and one of sapphires and brilliants; and dazzling bracelets, and all the stones more than precious; gems of Golconda no longer obtainable, and lustrous companions which only could have been created in the hot earth of Asia. From whom? Not a glimpse of meaning. All that was written, in a foreign handwriting on a sheet of notepaper, was, 'For the Lady Viscountess Waldershare.'

'When the revolution comes,' said Lord Hainault, 'Lord Waldershare and my daughter must turn jewellers. Their stock in trade is ready.'

The correspondence between Lady Montfort and Endymion had resumed its ancient habit. They wrote to each other every day, and one day she told him that she had purchased a house, and that she must come up to town to examine and to furnish it. She probably should be a month in London, and remaining there until the end of the season, in whose amusements and business, of course, she could not share. She should 'be at papa's,' though he and his family were in town; but that was no reason why Endymion should not call on her. And he came, and called every day. Lady Montfort was full of her new house; it was in Carlton Gardens, the house she always wished, always intended to have. There is nothing like will; everybody can do exactly what they like in this world, provided

they really like it. Sometimes they think they do, but in general, it is a mistake. Lady Montfort, it seemed, was a woman who always could do what she liked. She could do what she liked with Endymion Ferrars; that was quite certain. Supposed by men to have a strong will and a calm judgment, he was a nose of wax with this woman. He was fascinated by her, and he had been fascinated now for nearly ten years. What would be the result of this irresistible influence upon him? Would it make or mar those fortunes that once seemed so promising? The philosophers of White's and the Coventry were generally of opinion that he had no chance.

Lady Montfort was busy every morning with her new house, but she never asked Endymion to accompany her, though it seemed natural to do so. But he saw her every day, and 'papa,' who was a most kind and courtly gentleman, would often ask him, 'if he had nothing better to do,' to dine there, and he dined there frequently; and if he were engaged, he was always of opinion that he had nothing better to do.

At last, however, the season was over; the world had gone to Goodwood, and Lady Montfort was about to depart to Princedown. It was a dreary prospect for Endymion, and he could not conceal his feelings. He could not help saying one day, 'Do you know, now that you are going I almost wish to die.'

Alas! she only laughed. But he looked grave. 'I am very unhappy,' he sighed rather than uttered.

She looked at him with seriousness. 'I do not think our separation need be very long. Papa and all my family are coming to me in September to pay me a very long visit. I really do not see why you should not come too.'

Endymion's countenance mantled with rapture. 'If I might come, I think I should be the happiest of men!'

The month that was to elapse before his visit, Endymion was really, as he said, the happiest of men; at least, the world thought him so. He seemed to walk upon tip-toe. Parliament was prorogued, office was consigned to permanent secretaries, and our youthful statesmen seemed only to live to enjoy, and

add to, the revelry of existence. Now at Cowes, now stalking in the Highlands, dancing at balls in the wilderness, and running races of fantastic feats, full of health, and frolic, and charm; he was the delight of society, while, the whole time, he had only one thought, and that was the sacred day when he should again see the being whom he adored, and that in her beautiful home, which her presence made more lovely.

Yes! he was again at Princedown, in the bosom of her family; none others there; treated like one of themselves. The courtly father pressed his hand; the amiable and refined mother smiled upon him; the daughters, pretty, and natural as the air, treated him as if they were sisters, and even the eldest son, who generally hates you, after a little stiffness, announced in a tone never questioned under the family roof, that 'Ferrars was a first-rate shot.'

And so a month rolled on; immensely happy, as any man who has loved, and loved in a beautiful scene, alone can understand. One morning Lady Montfort said to him, 'I must go up to London about my house. I want to go and return the same day. Do you know, I think you had better come with me? You shall give me a luncheon in Hill Street, and we shall be back by the last train. It will be late, but we shall wake in the morning in the country, and that I always think a great thing.'

And so it happened; they rose early and arrived in town in time to give them a tolerably long morning. She took him to her house in Carlton Gardens, and showed to him exactly how it was all she wanted; accommodation for a first-rate establishment; and then the reception rooms, few houses in London could compare with them; a gallery and three saloons. Then they descended to the dining-room. 'It is a dining-room, not a banqueting hall,' she said, 'which we had at Montfort House, but still it is much larger than most dining-rooms in London. But, I think this room, at least I hope you do, quite charming,' and she took him to a room almost as large as the dining-room, and looking into the garden. It was fitted up with exquisite taste; calm subdued colouring, with choice marble busts

of statesmen, ancient and of our times, but the shelves were empty.

'They are empty,' she said, 'but the volumes to fill them are already collected. Yes,' she added in a tremulous voice, and slightly pressing the arm on which she leant. 'If you will deign to accept it, this is the chamber I have prepared for you.'

'Dearest of women!' and he took her hand.

'Yes,' she murmured, 'help me to realise the dream of my life;' and she touched his forehead with her lips.

CHAPTER XCIX.

The marriage of Mr. Ferrars with Lady Montfort surprised some, but, on the whole, pleased everybody. They were both of them popular, and no one seemed to envy them their happiness and prosperity. The union took place at a season of the year when there was no London world to observe and to criticise. It was a quiet ceremony; they went down to Northumberland to Lady Montfort's father, and they were married in his private chapel. After that they went off immediately to pay a visit to King Florestan and his queen; Myra had sent her a loving letter.

'Perhaps it will be the first time that your sister ever saw me with satisfaction,' remarked Lady Montfort, 'but I think she will love me now! I always loved her; perhaps because she is so like you.'

It was a happy meeting and a delightful visit. They did not talk much of the past. The enormous change in the position of their host and hostess since the first days of their acquaintance, and, on their own part, some indefinite feeling of delicate reserve, combined to make them rather dwell on a present which was full of novelty so attractive and so absorb-

ing. In his manner, the king was unchanged; he was never a demonstrative person, but simple, unaffected, rather silent; with a sweet temper and a tender manner, he seemed to be gratified that he had the power of conferring happiness on those around him. His feeling to his queen was one of idolatry, and she received Berengaria as a sister and a much-loved one. Their presence and the season of the year made their life a festival, and when they parted, there were entreaties and promises that the visit should be often repeated.

'Adieu! my Endymion,' said Myra at the last moment they were alone. 'All has happened for you beyond my hopes; all now is safe. I might wish we were in the same land, but not if I lost my husband, whom I adore.'

The reason that forced them to curtail their royal visit was the state of politics at home, which had suddenly become critical. There were symptoms, and considerable ones, of disturbance and danger when they departed for their wedding tour, but they could not prevail on themselves to sacrifice a visit on which they had counted so much, and which could not be fulfilled on another occasion under the same interesting circumstances. Besides, the position of Mr. Ferrars, though an important, was a subordinate one, and though cabinet ministers were not justified in leaving the country, an under-secretary of state and a bridegroom might, it would seem, depart on his irresponsible holiday. Mr. Sidney Wilton, however, shook his head; 'I do not like the state of affairs,' he said, 'I think you will have to come back sooner than you imagine.'

'You are not going to be so foolish as to have an early session?' inquired Lady Montfort.

He only shrugged his shoulders, and said, 'We are in a mess.'

What mess? and what was the state of affairs?

This had happened. At the end of the autumn, his Holiness the Pope had made half a dozen new cardinals, and to the surprise of the world, and the murmurs of the Italians, there appeared among them the name of an Englishman, Nigel Penruddock, archbishop *in partibus*. Shortly after this, a

papal bull, 'given at St. Peter's, Rome, under the seal of the fisherman,' was issued, establishing a Romish hierarchy in England. This was soon followed by a pastoral letter by the new cardinal 'given out of the Appian Gate,' announcing that 'Catholic England had been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament.'

The country at first was more stupefied than alarmed. It was conscious that something extraordinary had happened, and some great action taken by an ecclesiastical power, which from tradition it was ever inclined to view with suspicion and some fear. But it held its breath for a while. It so happened that the prime minister was a member of a great house which had become illustrious by its profession of Protestant principles, and even by its sufferings in a cause which England had once looked on as sacred. The prime minister, a man of distinguished ability, not devoid even of genius, was also a wily politician, and of almost unrivalled experience in the management of political parties. The ministry was weak and nearly worn out, and its chief, influenced partly by noble and historical sentiments, partly by a conviction that he had a fine occasion to rally the confidence of the country round himself and his friends, and to restore the repute of his political connection, thought fit, without consulting his colleagues, to publish a manifesto denouncing the aggression of the Pope upon our Protestantism as insolent and insidious, and as expressing a pretension of supremacy over the realm of England which made the minister indignant.

A confused public wanted to be led, and now they were led. They sprang to their feet like an armed man. The corporation of London, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had audiences of the Queen; the counties met, the municipalities memorialised; before the first of January there had been held nearly seven thousand public meetings, asserting the supremacy of the Queen and calling on Her Majesty's Government to vindicate it by stringent measures.

Unfortunately, it was soon discovered by the minister that there had been nothing illegal in the conduct of the Pope or the

Cardinal, and a considerable portion of the Liberal party began to express the inconvenient opinion, that the manifesto of their chief was opposed to those principles of civil and religious liberty of which he was the hereditary champion. Some influential members of his own cabinet did not conceal their disapprobation of a step on which they had not been consulted.

Immediately after Christmas, Endymion and Lady Montfort settled in London. She was anxious to open her new mansion as soon as parliament met, and to organise continuous receptions. She looked upon the ministry as in a critical state, and thought it was an occasion when social influences might not inconsiderably assist them.

But though she exhibited for this object her wonted energy and high spirit, a fine observer—Mr. Sidney Wilton, for example—might have detected a change in the manner of Berengaria. Though the strength of her character was unaltered, there was an absence of that restlessness, it might be said, that somewhat feverish excitement, from which formerly she was not always free. The truth is, her heart was satisfied, and that brought repose. Feelings of affection, long mortified and pent up, were now lavished and concentrated on a husband of her heart and adoration, and she was proud that his success and greatness might be avowed as the objects of her life.

The campaign, however, for which such preparations were made, ended almost before it began. The ministry, on the meeting of parliament, found themselves with a discontented House of Commons, and discordant counsels among themselves. The anti-papal manifesto was the secret cause of this evil state, but the prime minister, to avoid such a mortifying admission, took advantage of two unfavourable divisions on other matters, and resigned.

Here was a crisis—another crisis! Could the untried Protectionists, without men, form an administration? It was whispered that Lord Derby had been sent for, and declined the attempt. Then there was another rumour, that he was going to try. Mr. Bertie Tremaine looked mysterious. The time for

the third party had clearly arrived. It was known that he had the list of the next ministry in his breast-pocket, but it was only shown to Mr. Tremaine Bertie, who confided in secrecy to the initiated that it was the strongest government since 'All the Talents.'

Notwithstanding this great opportunity, 'All the Talents' were not summoned. The leader of the Protectionists renounced the attempt in despair, and the author of the anti-papal manifesto was again sent for, and obliged to introduce the measure which had already destroyed a government and disorganised a party.

'Sidney Wilton,' said Lady Montfort to her husband, 'says that they are in the mud, and he for one will not go back—but he will go. I know him. He is too soft-hearted to stand an appeal from colleagues in distress. But were I you, Endymion, I would not return. I think you want a little rest, or you have got a great deal of private business to attend to, or something of that kind. Nobody notices the withdrawal of an under-secretary except those in office. There is no necessity why you should be in the mud. I will continue to receive, and do everything that is possible for our friends, but I think my husband has been an under-secretary long enough.'

Endymion quite agreed with his wife. The minister offered him preferment and the Privy Council, but Lady Montfort said it was really not so important as the office he had resigned. She was resolved that he should not return to them, and she had her way. Ferrars himself now occupied a rather peculiar position, being the master of a great fortune and of an establishment which was the headquarters of the party of which he was now only a private member; but, calm and collected, he did not lose his head; always said and did the right thing, and never forgot his early acquaintances. Trenchard was his bosom political friend. Seymour Hicks, who, through Endymion's kindness, had now got into the Treasury, and was quite fashionable, had the run of the House, and made himself marvellously useful, while St. Barbe, who had become by mistake a member of the Conservative Club, drank his frequent claret cup every Saturday

evening at Lady Montfort's receptions with many pledges to the welfare of the Liberal administration.

The flag of the Tory party waved over the magnificent mansion of which Imogene Beaumaris was the graceful life. As parties were nearly equal, and the ministry was supposed to be in decay, the rival reception was as well attended as that of Berengaria. The two great leaders were friends, intimate, but not perhaps quite so intimate as a few years before. 'Lady Montfort is very kind to me,' Imogene would say, 'but I do not think she now quite remembers we are cousins.' Both Lord and Lady Waldershare seemed equally devoted to Lady Beaumaris. 'I do not think,' he would say, 'that I shall ever get Adriana to receive. It is an organic gift, and very rare. What I mean to do is to have a first-rate villa and give the party strawberries. I always say Adriana is like Nell Gwyn, and she shall go about with a pottle. One never sees a pottle of strawberries now. I believe they went out, like all good things, with the Stuarts.'

And so, after all these considerable events, the season rolled on and closed tranquilly. Lord and Lady Hainault continued to give banquets, over which the hostess sighed; Sir Peter Vigo had the wisdom to retain his millions, which few manage to do, as it is admitted that it is easier to make a fortune than to keep one. Mrs. Rodney, supremely habited, still drove her ponies, looking younger and prettier than ever, and getting more fashionable every day, and Mr. Ferrars and Berengaria, Countess of Montfort, retired in the summer to their beautiful and beloved Princedown.

CHAPTER C.

ALTHOUGH the past life of Endymion had, on the whole, been a happy life, and although he was destined also to a happy future, perhaps the four years which elapsed from the time he quitted office, certainly in his experience had never been exceeded, and it was difficult to imagine could be exceeded, in felicity. He had a great interest, and even growing influence in public life without any of its cares; he was united to a woman whom he had long passionately loved, and who had every quality and accomplishment to make existence delightful; he was master of a fortune which secured him all those advantages which are appreciated by men of taste and generosity. He became a father, and a family name which had been originally borne by a courtier of the elder Stuarts was now bestowed on the future lord of Princedown.

Lady Montfort herself had no thought but her husband. His happiness, his enjoyment of existence, his success and power in life, entirely absorbed her. The anxiety which she felt that in everything he should be master was touching. Once looked upon as the most imperious of women, she would not give a direction on any matter without his opinion and sanction. One would have supposed from what might be observed under their roof, that she was some beautiful but portionless maiden whom Endymion had raised to wealth and power.

All this time, however, Lady Montfort sedulously maintained that commanding position in social politics for which she was singularly fitted. Indeed, in that respect, she had no rival. She received the world with the same constancy and splendour, as if she were the wife of a minister. Animated by Waldershare, Lady Beaumaris maintained in this respect a certain degree of rivalry. She was the only hope and refuge of the Tories, and rich, attractive, and popular, her competition could not be disregarded. But Lord Beaumaris was a little freakish.

Sometimes he would sail in his yacht to odd places, and was at Algiers or in Egypt when, according to Tadpole, he ought to have been at Piccadilly Terrace. Then he occasionally got crusty about his hunting. He would hunt, whatever were the political consequences, but whether he were in Africa or Leicestershire, Imogene must be with him. He could not exist without her constant presence. There was something in her gentleness, combined with her quick and ready sympathy and playfulness of mind and manner, which alike pleased and soothed his life.

The Whigs tottered on for a year after the rude assault of Cardinal Penruddock, but they were doomed, and the Protectionists were called upon to form an administration. As they had no one in their ranks who had ever been in office except their chief, who was in the House of Lords, the affair seemed impossible. The attempt, however, could not be avoided. A dozen men, without the slightest experience of official life, had to be sworn in as privy councillors, before even they could receive the seals and insignia of their intended offices. On their knees, according to the constitutional custom, a dozen men, all in the act of genuflexion at the same moment, and headed, too, by one of the most powerful peers in the country, the Lord of Alnwick Castle himself, humbled themselves before a female Sovereign, who looked serene and imperturbable before a spectacle never seen before, and which, in all probability, will never be seen again.

One of this band, a gentleman without any official experience whatever, was not only placed in the cabinet, but was absolutely required to become the leader of the House of Commons, which had never occurred before, except in the instance of Mr. Pitt in 1782. It has been said that it was unwise in the Protectionists assuming office when, on this occasion and on subsequent ones, they were far from being certain of a majority in the House of Commons. It should, however, be remembered, that unless they had dared these ventures, they never could have formed a body of men competent, from their official experience and their practice in debate, to form a ministry. The result has rather proved

that they were right. Had they continued to refrain from incurring responsibility, they must have broken up and merged in different connections, which, for a party numerically so strong as the Protectionists, would have been a sorry business, and probably have led to disastrous results.

Mr. Bertie Tremaine having been requested to call on the Protectionist prime minister, accordingly repaired to headquarters with the list of his colleagues in his pocket. He was offered for himself a post of little real importance, but which secured to him the dignity of the privy council. Mr. Tremaine Bertie and several of his friends had assembled at his house, awaiting with anxiety his return. He had to communicate to them that he had been offered a privy councillor's post, and to break to them that it was not proposed to provide for any other member of his party. Their indignation was extreme; but they naturally supposed that he had rejected the offer to himself with becoming scorn. Their leader, however, informed them that he had not felt it his duty to be so peremptory. They should remember that the recognition of their political status by such an offer to their chief was a considerable event. For his part, he had for some time been painfully aware that the influence of the House of Commons in the constitutional scheme was fast waning, and that the plan of Sir William Temple for the reorganisation of the privy council, and depositing in it the real authority of the State, was that to which we should be obliged to have recourse. This offer to him of a seat in the council was, perhaps, the beginning of the end. It was a crisis; they must look to seats in the privy council, which, under Sir William Temple's plan, would be accompanied with ministerial duties and salaries. What they had all, at one time, wished, had not exactly been accomplished, but he had felt it his duty to his friends not to shrink from responsibility. So he had accepted the minister's offer.

Mr. Bertie Tremaine was not long in the busy enjoyment of his easy post. Then the country was governed for two years by all its ablest men, who, by the end of that term, had succeeded, by their coalesced genius, in reducing that country to a

state of desolation and despair. 'I did not think it would have lasted even so long,' said Lady Montfort; 'but then I was acquainted with their mutual hatreds and their characteristic weaknesses. What is to happen now? Somebody must be found of commanding private character and position, and with as little damaged a public one as in this wreck of reputations is possible. I see nobody but Sidney Wilton. Everybody likes him, and he is the only man who could bring people together.'

And everybody seemed to be saying the same thing at the same time. The name of Sidney Wilton was in everybody's mouth. It was unfortunate that he had been a member of the defunct ministry, but then it had always been understood that he had always disapproved of all their measures. There was not the slightest evidence of this, but everybody chose to believe it.

Sidney Wilton was chagrined with life, and had become a martyr to the gout, which that chagrin had aggravated; but he was a great gentleman, and too chivalric to refuse a royal command when the Sovereign was in distress. Sidney Wilton became Premier, and the first colleague he recommended to fill the most important post after his own, the Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs, was Mr. Ferrars.

'It ought to last ten years,' said Lady Montfort. 'I see no danger except his health. I never knew a man so changed. At his time of life five years ought to make no difference in a man. I cannot believe he is the person who used to give us those charming parties at Gaydene. Whatever you may say, Endymion, I feel convinced that something must have passed between your sister and him. Neither of them ever gave me a hint of such a matter, or of the possibility of its ever happening, but feminine instinct assures me that something took place. He always had the gout, and his ancestors have had the gout for a couple of centuries; and all prime ministers have the gout. I dare say you will not escape, darling, but I hope it will never make you look as if you had just lost paradise, or, what would be worst, become the last man.'

Lady Montfort was right. The ministry was strong and it

was popular. There were no jealousies in it; every member was devoted to his chief, and felt that he was rightly the chief, whereas, as Lady Montfort said, the Whigs never had a ministry before in which there were not at least a couple of men who had been prime ministers, and as many more who thought they ought to be.

There were years of war, and of vast and critical negotiations. Ferrars was equal to the duties, for he had much experience, and more thought, and he was greatly aided by the knowledge of affairs, and the clear and tranquil judgment of the chief minister. There was only one subject on which there was not between them that complete and cordial unanimity which was so agreeable and satisfactory. And even in this case, there was no difference of opinion, but rather of sentiment and feeling. It was when Prince Florestan expressed his desire to join the grand alliance, and become our active military ally. It was perhaps impossible, under any circumstances, for the Powers to refuse such an offer, but Endymion was strongly in favour of accepting it. It consolidated our interests in a part of Europe where we required sympathy and support, and it secured for us the aid and influence of the great Liberal party of the continent as distinguished from the secret societies and the socialist republicans. The Count of Ferroll, also, whose opinion weighed much with Her Majesty's Government, was decidedly in favour of the combination. The English prime minister listened to their representations frigidly; it was difficult to refute the arguments which were adverse to his own feelings, and to resist the unanimous opinion not only of his colleagues, but of our allies. But he was cold and silent, or made discouraging remarks.

'Can you trust him?' he would say. 'Remember he himself has been, and still is, a member of the very secret societies whose baneful influence we are now told he will neutralise or subdue. Whatever the cabinet decides, and I fear that with this strong expression of opinion on the part of our allies we have little option left, remember I gave you my warning. I know the gentleman, and I do not trust him.'

After this, the prime minister had a most severe attack of the

gout, remained for weeks at Gaydene, and saw no one on business except Endymion and Baron Sergius.

While the time is elapsing which can alone decide whether the distrust of Mr. Wilton were well-founded or the reverse, let us see how the world is treating the rest of our friends.

Lord Waldershare did not make such a pattern husband as Endymion, but he made a much better one than the world ever supposed he would. Had he married Berengaria, the failure would have been great; but he was united to a being capable of deep affection and very sensitive, yet grateful for kindness from a husband to a degree not easily imaginable. And Waldershare had really a good heart, though a bad temper, and he was a gentleman. Besides, he had a great admiration and some awe of his father-in-law, and Lord Hainault, with his good-natured irony, and consummate knowledge of men and things, quite controlled him. With Lady Hainault he was a favourite. He invented plausible theories and brilliant paradoxes for her, which left her always in a state of charmed wonder, and when she met him again, and adopted or refuted them, for her intellectual power was considerable, he furnished her with fresh dogmas and tenets, which immediately interested her intelligence, though she generally forgot to observe that they were contrary to the views and principles of the last visit. Between Adriana and Imogene there was a close alliance, and Lady Beaumaris did everything in her power to develop Lady Waldershare advantageously before her husband; and so, not forgetting that Waldershare, with his romance, and imagination, and fancy, and taste, and caprice, had a considerable element of worldliness in his character, and that he liked to feel that, from living in lodgings, he had become a Monte Cristo, his union with Adriana may be said to be a happy and successful one.

The friendship between Sir Peter Vigo and his brother M.P., Mr. Rodney, never diminished, and Mr. Rodney became richer every year. He experienced considerable remorse at sitting in opposition to the son of his right honourable friend, the late William Pitt Ferrars, and frequently consulted Sir Peter on his embarrassment and difficulty. Sir Peter, who never declined

arranging any difficulty, told his friend to be easy, and that he, Sir Peter, saw his way. It became gradually understood, that if ever the government was in difficulties, Mr. Rodney's vote might be counted on. He was peculiarly situated, for, in a certain sense, his friend the Right Honourable William Pitt Ferrars had entrusted the guardianship of his child to his care. But whenever the ministry was not in danger, the ministry must not depend upon his vote.

Trenchard had become Secretary of the Treasury in the Wilton administration, had established his reputation, and was looked upon as a future minister. Jawett, without forfeiting his post and promotion at Somerset House, had become the editor of a new periodical magazine, called the 'Privy Council.' It was established and maintained by Mr. Bertie Tremaine, and was chiefly written by that gentleman himself. It was full of Greek quotations, to show that it was not Grub Street, and written in a style as like that of Sir William Temple, as a paper in 'Rejected Addresses' might resemble the classic lucubrations of the statesman-sage who, it is hoped, will be always remembered by a grateful country for having introduced into these islands the Moor Park apricot. What the pages of the 'Privy Council' meant no human being had the slightest conception except Mr. Tremaine Bertie.

Mr. Thornberry remained a respected member of the cabinet. It was thought his presence there secured the sympathies of advanced Liberalism throughout the country; but that was a tradition rather than a fact. Statesmen in high places are not always so well acquainted with the changes and gradations of opinion in political parties at home as they are with those abroad. We hardly mark the growth of the tree we see every day. Mr. Thornberry had long ceased to be popular with his former friends, and the fact that he had become a minister was one of the causes of this change of feeling. That was unreasonable, but in politics unreasonable circumstances are elements of the problem to be solved. It was generally understood that, on the next election, Mr. Thornberry would have to look out for another seat; his chief constituents, those who are locally

styled the leaders of the party, were still faithful to him, for they were proud of having a cabinet minister for their member, to be presented by him at court, and occasionally to dine with him; but the 'masses,' who do not go to court, and are never asked to dinner, required a member who would represent their whims, and it was quite understood that, on the very first occasion, this enlightened community had resolved to send up to Westminster—Mr. Enoch Craggs.

It is difficult to say, whether in his private life Job found affairs altogether more satisfactory than in his public. His wife had joined the Roman Communion. An ingrained perverseness which prevented his son from ever willingly following the advice or example of his parents, had preserved John Hampden to the Anglican faith, but he had portraits of Laud and Strafford over his mantelpiece, and embossed in golden letters on a purple ground the magical word 'THOROUGH.' His library chiefly consisted of the 'Tracts for the Times,' and a colossal edition of the Fathers gorgeously bound. He was a very clever fellow, this young Thornberry, a natural orator, and was leader of the High Church party in the Oxford Union. He brought home his friends occasionally to Hurstley, and Job had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with a class and school of humanity—with which, notwithstanding his considerable experience of life, he had no previous knowledge—young gentlemen, apparently half-starved and dressed like priests, and sometimes an enthusiastic young noble, in much better physical condition, and in costume becoming a cavalier, ready to raise the royal standard at Edgehill. What a little annoyed Job was that his son always addressed him as 'Squire,' a habit even pedantically followed by his companions. He was, however, justly entitled to this ancient and reputable honour, for Job had been persuaded to purchase Hurstley, was a lord of several thousand acres, and had the boar's head carried in procession at Christmas in his ancient hall. It is strange, but he was rather perplexed than annoyed by all these marvellous metamorphoses in his life and family. His intelligence was as clear as ever, and his views on all subjects unchanged; but he was, like many other men,

governed at home by his affections. He preferred the new arrangement, if his wife and family were happy and contented, to a domestic system founded on his own principles, accompanied by a sullen or shrewish partner of his life and rebellious offspring.

What really vexed him, among comparatively lesser matters, was the extraordinary passion which in time his son imbibed for game-preserving. He did at last interfere on this matter, but in vain. John Hampden announced that he did not value land if he was only to look at it, and that sport was the patriotic pastime of an English gentleman. 'You used in old days never to be satisfied with what I got out of the land,' said the old grandfather to Job, with a little amiable malice; 'there is enough at any rate now for the hares and rabbits, but I doubt for anybody else.'

We must not forget our old friend St. Barbe. Whether he had written himself out or had become lazy in the luxurious life in which he now indulged, he rarely appealed to the literary public, which still admired him. He was, by way of intimating that he was engaged in a great work, which, though written in his taking prose, was to be really the epopee of social life in this country. Dining out every day, and ever arriving, however late, at those 'small and earlies,' which he once despised; he gave to his friends frequent intimations that he was not there for pleasure, but rather following his profession; he was in his studio, observing and reflecting on all the passions and manners of mankind, and gathering materials for the great work which was eventually to enchant and instruct society, and immortalise his name.

'The fact is, I wrote too early,' he would say. 'I blush when I read my own books, though compared with those of the brethren, they might still be looked on as classics. They say no artist can draw a camel, and I say no author ever drew a gentleman. How can they, with no opportunity of ever seeing one? And so with a little caricature of manners, which they catch second-hand, they are obliged to have recourse to outrageous nonsense, as if polished life consisted only of

bigamists, and that ladies of fashion were in the habit of paying black mail to returned convicts. However, I shall put an end to all this. I have now got the materials, or am accumulating them daily. You hint that I give myself up too much to society. You are talking of things you do not understand. A dinner party is a chapter. I catch the Cynthia of the minute, sir, at a *soirée*. If I only served a grateful country, I should be in the proudest position of any of its sons; if I had been born in any country but this, I should have been decorated, and perhaps made secretary of state like Addison, who did not write as well as I do, though his style somewhat resembles mine.'

Notwithstanding these great plans, it came in time to Endymion's ear, that poor St. Barbe was in terrible straits. Endymion delicately helped him and then obtained for him a pension, and not an inconsiderable one. Relieved from anxiety, St. Barbe resumed his ancient and natural vein. He passed his days in decrying his friend and patron, and comparing his miserable pension with the salary of a secretary of state, who, so far as his experience went, was generally a second-rate man. Endymion, though he knew St. Barbe was always decrying him, only smiled, and looked upon it all as the necessary consequence of his organisation, which involved a singular combination of vanity and envy in the highest degree. St. Barbe was not less a guest in Carlton Terrace than heretofore, and was even kindly invited to Princedown to profit by the distant seabreeze. Lady Montfort, whose ears some of his pranks had reached, was not so tolerant as her husband. She gave him one day her views of his conduct. St. Barbe was always a little afraid of her, and on this occasion entirely lost himself; vented the most solemn affirmations that there was not a grain of truth in these charges; that he was the victim, as he had been all his life, of slander and calumny—the sheer creatures of envy, and then began to fawn upon his hostess, and declared that he had ever thought there was something godlike in the character of her husband.

'And what is there in yours, Mr. St. Barbe?' asked Lady Montfort.

The ministry had lasted several years; its foreign policy had been successful; it had triumphed in war and secured peace. The military conduct of the troops of King Florestan had contributed to these results, and the popularity of that sovereign in England was for a foreigner unexampled. During this agitated interval, Endymion and Myra had met more than once through the providential medium of those favoured spots of nature—German baths.

There had arisen a public feeling, that the ally who had served us so well should be invited to visit again a country wherein he had so long sojourned, and where he was so much appreciated. The only evidence that the Prime Minister gave that he was conscious of this feeling was an attack of gout. Endymion himself, though in a difficult and rather painful position in this matter, did everything to shield and protect his chief, but the general sentiment became so strong, sanctioned too, as it was understood, in the highest quarter, that it could no longer be passed by unnoticed; and, in due time, to the great delight and satisfaction of the nation, an impending visit from our faithful ally King Florestan and his beautiful wife, Queen Myra, was authoritatively announced.

Every preparation was made to show them honour. They were the guests of our Sovereign; but from the palace which they were to inhabit, to the humblest tenement in the meanest back street, there was only one feeling of gratitude, and regard, and admiration. The English people are the most enthusiastic people in the world; there are other populations which are more excitable, but there is no nation, when it feels, where the sentiment is so profound and irresistible.

The hour arrived. The season and the weather were favourable. From the port where they landed to their arrival at the metropolis, the whole country seemed poured out into the open air; triumphal arches, a way of flags and banners, and bits of bunting on every hovel. The King and Queen were received

at the metropolitan station by Princes of the blood, and accompanied to the palace, where the great officers of state and the assembled ministry were gathered together to do them honour. A great strain was thrown upon Endymion throughout these proceedings, as the Prime Minister, who had been suffering the whole season, and rarely present in his seat in parliament, was, at this moment, in his worst paroxysm. He could not therefore be present at the series of balls and banquets, and brilliant public functions, which greeted the royal guests. Their visit to the City, when they dined with the Lord Mayor, and to which they drove in royal carriages through a sea of population tumultuous with devotion, was the most gratifying of all these splendid receptions, partly from the associations of mysterious power and magnificence connected with the title and character of Lord Mayor. The Duke of St. Angelo, the Marquis of Vallombrosa, and the Prince of Montserrat, quite lost their presence of mind. Even the Princess of Montserrat, with more quarterings on her own side than any house in Europe, confessed that she trembled when Her Serene Highness courtesied before the Lady Mayoress. Perhaps, however, the most brilliant, the most fanciful, infinitely the most costly entertainment that was given on this memorable occasion, was the festival at Hainault. The whole route from town to the forest was lined with thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of spectators; a thousand guests were received at the banquet, and twelve palaces were raised by that true magician, Mr. Benjamin Edgington, in the park, for the countless visitors in the evening. At night the forest was illuminated. Everybody was glad except Lady Hainault, who sighed, and said, 'I have no doubt the Queen would have preferred her own room, and that we should have had a quiet dinner, as in old days, in the little Venetian parlour.'

When Endymion returned home at night, he found a summons to Gaydene; the Prime Minister being, it was feared, in a dangerous state.

The next day, late in the afternoon, there was a rumour that the Prime Minister had resigned. Then it was authoritatively

contradicted, and then at night another rumour rose that the minister had resigned, but that the resignation would not be accepted until after the termination of the royal visit. The King and Queen had yet to remain a short week.

The fact is, the resignation had taken place, but it was known only to those who then could not have imparted the intelligence. The public often conjectures the truth, though it clothes its impression or information in the vague shape of a rumour. In four-and-twenty hours the great fact was authoritatively announced in all the journals, with leading articles speculating on the successor to the able and accomplished minister of whose services the Sovereign and the country were so unhappily deprived. Would his successor be found in his own cabinet? And then several names were mentioned; Rawchester, to Lady Montfort's disgust. Rawchester was a safe man, and had had much experience, which, as with most safe men, probably left him as wise and able as before he imbibed it. Would there be altogether a change of parties? Would the Protectionists try again? They were very strong, but always in a minority, like some great continental powers, who have the finest army in the world, and yet get always beaten. Would that band of self-admiring geniuses, who had upset every cabinet with whom they were ever connected, return on the shoulders of the people, as they always dreamed, though they were always the persons of whom the people never seemed to think?

Lady Montfort was in a state of passive excitement. She was quite pale, and she remained quite pale for hours. She would see no one. She sat in Endymion's room, and never spoke, while he continued writing and transacting his affairs. She thought she was reading the 'Morning Post,' but really could not distinguish the advertisements from leading articles.

There was a knock at the library door, and the groom of the chambers brought in a note for Endymion. He glanced at the handwriting of the address, and then opened it, as pale

as his wife. Then he read it again, and then he gave it to her. She threw her eyes over it, and then her arms around his neck.

'Order my brougham at three o'clock.'

CHAPTER CI.

ENDYMION was with his sister.

'How dear of you to come to me,' she said, 'when you cannot have a moment to yourself.'

'Well, you know,' he replied, 'it is not like forming a government. That is an affair. I have reason to think all my colleagues will remain with me. I shall summon them for this afternoon, and if we agree, affairs will go on as before. I should like to get down to Gaydene to-night.'

'To-night!' said the queen musingly. 'We have only one day left, and I wanted you to do something for me.'

'It shall be done, if possible; I need not say that.'

'It is not difficult to do, if we have time—if we have to-morrow morning, and early. But if you go to Gaydene you will hardly return to-night, and I shall lose my chance,—and yet it is to me a business most precious.'

'It shall be managed; tell me then.'

'I learnt that Hill Street is not occupied at this moment. I want to visit the old house with you, before I leave England, probably for ever. I have only got the early morn to-morrow, but with a veil and your brougham, I think we might depart unobserved, before the crowd begins to assemble. Do you think you could be here at nine o'clock?'

So it was settled, and being hurried, he departed.

And next morning he was at the palace before nine o'clock; and the queen, veiled, entered his brougham. There were al-

ready some loiterers, but the brother and sister passed through the gates unobserved.

They reached Hill Street. The queen visited all the principal rooms, and made many remarks appropriate to many memories. 'But,' she said, 'it was not to see these rooms I came, though I was glad to do so, and the corridor on the second story whence I called out to you when you returned, and for ever, from Eton, and told you there was bad news. What I came for was to see our old nursery, where we lived so long together, and so fondly! Here it is; here we are. All I have desired, all I have dreamed, have come to pass. Darling, beloved of my soul, by all our sorrows, by all our joys, in this scene of our childhood and bygone days, let me give you my last embrace.'

THE END.

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